

= Ellen Roberts =

Ellen Stuart Roberts (born August 27 , 1959) is an attorney and Republican legislator in the U.S. State of Colorado . From 2006 @-@ 2010 , Roberts served as the State Representative for House District 59 . In 2010 , she was elected to Senate District 6 and is the current Senator for that district , which encompasses Archuleta , Dolores , La Plata , Montezuma , Montrose , Ouray , San Juan , and San Miguel counties . In 2015 , she was elected to serve as the President Pro @-@ Tem for the Colorado State Senate .

= = Biography = =

Born in Hudson , New York , Roberts was raised in Rhinebeck , where she was elected class president in high school . She earned a self @-@ designed undergraduate degree in environmental policy from Cornell University in 1981 . During college , she spent a semester as an intern in Washington DC , working for her Congressional representative and for the Republican National Committee .

She moved to Colorado upon graduation and worked as a ranger in Rocky Mountain National Park until 1984 . In 1982 , Roberts married ; she and her husband , Rick , have two children : Caitlin and Ben , both of whom have attended Fort Lewis College in Durango , Colorado .

After being hired by a law firm in Granby , Colorado , Roberts returned to school to earn a J.D. from the University of Colorado in 1986 . She worked as an attorney in private practice in Granby and Hot Sulphur Springs , specializing in estate , probate and business law .

A resident of Durango , Colorado since 1989 , she joined the Southwest Colorado Bar Association in 1986 and served as its president , and as president of the Southwest Colorado Women 's Bar Association . As an attorney , Roberts advocated for increased legal services for immigrants and Spanish @-@ speakers in southwestern Colorado

Roberts has focused on health care , constitutional reform , judicial , and financial issues in the state legislature , and , despite being in the minority party , has seen almost all legislation she sponsored signed into law . She has also carried legislation to strengthen private property rights surrounding oil and gas drilling , and to create a legislative youth advisory council .

= = Early career = =

Roberts began to re @-@ enter politics after the death of her father in 1992 , first focusing on hospice and health care issues . As a member (since 1999) and later chairman of the board of Mercy Regional Medical Center , she pushed for the construction of a new hospital in Durango . She chaired Healthy 58 , a rural health care task force , and in 2001 , was appointed to the Task Force to Evaluate Health Care Needs for Colorado , a commission formed by the legislature to study health @-@ care needs in rural Colorado communities .

Roberts sat on the Sixth Judicial District Nominating Commission , and co @-@ chaired the Durango Citizens Steering Committee for a New Library , a successful effort to push for a new local public library that was eventually built on the site of Mercy Medical Center , the hospital Roberts had worked to help replace . She was a member of the Citizens Health Advisory Council , the High Noon Rotary Club , and sat on the boards of First National Bank and the Community Foundation Serving Southwest Colorado . In 2004 , she won the Durango Chamber of Commerce 's Athena Award for professional women in business .

= = Colorado House of Representatives = =

= = = 2006 Election = = =

In December 2004 , only a month after Larson was elected to his fourth and final term in the state

house , Roberts filed for a 2006 candidacy to seek his seat . She announced her campaign formally in January 2005 . She was endorsed by Larson , and won the Republican nomination unopposed .

As Representative Mark Larson neared the end of his term @-@ limited tenure in the Colorado House of Representatives , Roberts began to work with him on learning the legislative process , in preparation for seeking elected office herself . She instigated a bill , introduced by Larson and eventually signed into law , to require that remains be handled in accordance with the wishes of the deceased . She also lobbied the legislature , unsuccessfully , for the creation of an interim committee to study palliative care .

During the general election campaign , Roberts emphasized her work on health care issues and her experience working with Representative Larson in the legislature , and criticized the passage of constitutional amendments creating conflicting fiscal obligations . Although both Roberts and her main opponent , Democrat Joe Colgan , signed a clean campaign pledge , controversy arose over advertisements run by outside sources . In particular , Roberts denounced as " misleading " and " unacceptable " a television advertisement criticizing Colgan 's record as mayor of Durango . The ad , which was run by a political group associated with the Colorado Association of Home Builders , was later pulled off the air . Direct mail flyers sent by right @-@ leaning outside groups during the last weeks of the campaign also misrepresented both candidates ' stances on immigration , exaggerating the contrast between their positions .

In addition to her Democratic opponent , Roberts faced unaffiliated write @-@ in candidate Christopher Navage . Navage withdrew from the race in October 2006 and endorsed Colgan . Roberts significantly outraised her opponents , donating over \$ 8 @,@ 000 to her own campaign , and ultimately winning the November 2006 general election with 52 percent of the vote .

= = = 2007 Legislative Session = = =

In the 2007 session of the Colorado General Assembly , Roberts was a member of the House Health and Human Services Committee , the Joint Legal Services Committee , and the House Judiciary Committee .

Roberts was one of the most successful Republican legislators at passing legislation through the Democrat @-@ controlled legislature , and has been identified by media reports and commentators as a " standout " legislator and a potential candidate for higher office . She also organized bowling outings for legislators during her first year in the legislature .

Roberts carried legislation which revised Colorado 's surface rights laws , requiring oil and gas companies to minimize the impacts of drilling . The bill was weakened by lobbying from the Colorado Oil and Gas Association , but represented a breadth of reform that had failed to pass in previous legislative sessions .

During her first legislative session , Roberts also sponsored bills to revise the process by which special health care districts are created and to expand eligibility for Korean War special license plates ; she cosponsored legislation to fund study of a methane seep in southwestern Colorado .

Her only unsuccessful bill was a measure to tighten the rules under which cigar bars could claim exemptions from Colorado 's indoor smoking ban . After being killed in committee , the measure was revived in the Colorado Senate by Democrats , but was again unsuccessful .

Following the 2007 session , Roberts was named by House Republican leadership to the newly formed Criminal and Juvenile Justice Commission . In November 2007 , she was named a Legislator of Merit by the Colorado Behavioral Health Council . She joined with other Republicans to criticize an executive order issued by Governor Bill Ritter allowing collective bargaining with government employee unions as a betrayal of Ritter 's promise of bipartisan cooperation on major issues .

= = = 2008 Legislative Session = = =

In the 2008 session of the Colorado General Assembly , Roberts sat on the House Health and Human Services Committee and the House Judiciary Committee . She introduced eight bills during

the session , all of which were passed by the legislature .

During the 2008 legislative session , Roberts introduced a bill , drafted and lobbied for by Colorado students , to create a legislative youth advisory council . The bill stalled in the legislature until its minimal cost was approved by the House Appropriations Committee , after which it cleared both the House and Senate , and Governor Bill Ritter signed it into law . She was later appointed by Minority Leader Mike May to be one of the legislative members of the council .

Roberts introduced a bill which would grant advanced practice nurses power to sign off on additional medical forms , in response to shortages of doctors in portions of rural Colorado , a measure which garnered support from both nurses ' and doctors ' associations . In March , she backed a proposal to require that insurance companies offer low @-@ cost health care benefit packages for Coloradoans , as part of a " public @-@ private " plan towards achieving universal coverage .

Roberts was the sponsor of a legislative resolution urging the Federal Communications Commission to support including southwestern Colorado , including portions of her district , within the Denver media market , a resolution she introduced again in 2010 .

Before the session began , Roberts had expressed interest in sponsoring legislation to revise the process by which the Colorado Constitution is amended through ballot measures , proposing that supermajority popular votes be required to enact amendments . She proposed extending the public hearing process as a means of providing additional input on ballot measures , and , in February 2008 , was appointed to a six @-@ member legislative panel tasked with developing recommendations for constitutional reform . She was ultimately a cosponsor of the panel 's proposal to create distinctions in the petition process between constitutional and statutory amendments , ; the proposal which was referred by the legislature to voters and appeared on the November 2008 Colorado ballot as Referendum O. Roberts campaigned in support of Referendum O during the fall campaign .

Roberts was one of a few Republicans to back a measure to reform spending requirements in Colorado 's state constitution . The proposal , which would have diverted excess revenues under TABOR to K @-@ 12 education , was regarded as a sweeping revision to competing constitutional mandates ; it was not passed by the General Assembly , but was advanced as a citizens ' initiative .

= = = 2008 Election = = =

Roberts was nominated by the Republican Party for a second term in the state house ; she faced no challengers either in the Republican primary or in the general election .

Roberts stood against some fellow Republicans by opposing Amendment 52 , a ballot measure on the November ballot that would reallocate some severance tax revenue from water projects to transportation . She also backed Republican presidential candidate John McCain and spoke before McCain at an October rally in Durango , Colorado .

Following her re @-@ election , Roberts was nominated for the post of House Minority Caucus Chair , but lost the caucus ' vote for the post to Rep. Amy Stephens . After losing the vote , Roberts publicly lamented the lack of rural representation in legislative leadership and alleged that Republican lawmakers were threatened with primaries if they voted for her leadership bid .

= = = 2009 Legislative Session = = =

For the 2009 legislative session , Roberts was appointed to the House Health and Human Services Committee and the House Judiciary Committee , where she was the ranking Republican member . Roberts was also named to a Republican task force charged with making recommendations on resolving the state 's projected budget shortfall . In 2009 , Roberts also sat on the Colorado Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice and co @-@ chaired the Colorado Youth Advisory Council .

During the 2009 session , Roberts sponsored several bills relating to juvenile criminal offenders , including legislation to allow more juveniles to have their criminal records expunged , and to allow

young adults to serve sentences within the Youth Offender System instead of correctional facilities . Roberts also sponsored legislation to make minor adjustment to the statutes concerning the Colorado Youth Advisory Council , legislation to create a regional self @-@ insurance plan within the San Luis Valley , and legislation revising statutes surrounding end @-@ of @-@ life care .

= = = 2010 Legislative Session = = =

Following the 2009 legislative session , Roberts sat on an interim committee dealing with hospice and palliative care issues , and carried legislation originating from that committee during the 2010 session , including two bills that clarified policies surrounding end @-@ of @-@ life care and advance directives . Other legislation that Roberts carried in 2010 included a bill to allow voluntary income tax contributions to support 2 @-@ 1 @-@ 1 services , and she fought against cuts to the Native American tuition waiver program at Fort Lewis College . Roberts was one of only three Republican House members to vote in support of Colorado 's 2010 budget , after successfully sponsoring an amendment that removed restrictions on Fort Lewis College 's ability to set its own out @-@ of @-@ state tuition rates .

Roberts had planned to introduce legislation to place a one @-@ year moratorium on new Colorado health insurance mandates with independent Rep. Kathleen Curry , as part of a proposal to overhaul the states insurance mandate commission . However , they announced at the start of the session that their proposal would not include an immediate moratorium on insurance mandates , and the legislation was killed on its first hearing in a House committee . Roberts also withdrew one of her proposals to continue a pilot program for training of Certified Nursing Assistants , on account of its cost . Roberts also sponsored a contentious piece of legislation with general election opponent Sen. Bruce Whitehead , negotiated by Governor Ritter 's office , to require utilities to convert some Front Range coal @-@ fired power plants to natural gas .

= = Colorado Senate = =

= = = 2010 Election = = =

In June 2009 , Roberts announced her intention to seek the Colorado State Senate seat held by term @-@ limited Democratic Sen. Jim Isgar in the 2010 legislative elections , Senate District 6 . After Isgar resigned from the legislature in July 2009 to head the U.S. Department of Agriculture 's Rural Development office in Colorado , Democrats appointed civil engineer Bruce Whitehead to the seat ; Whitehead declared his intention to run for a full term in 2010 , setting up a race that Colorado Republicans viewed as one of their best opportunities to pick up a seat in the Democrat @-@ controlled legislature .

Roberts ' 2010 campaign for the Senate seat also faced a challenge in the Republican primary from former Norwood , Colorado town marshal Dean Boehler , who campaigns as a self @-@ described " true conservative ; " Boehler received 67 percent of delegate votes at the Republican district assembly to Roberts ' 33 , earning him the top spot on the August primary ballot . Roberts won the primary race with 54 % of the vote and went on to win the general election with 61 % of the vote .

= = = 2011 Legislative Session = = =

As state senator , Roberts served on several committees , including the Health and Human Services , Judiciary , and Legislative Legal Services Committees and also acted as ranking Republican on the Senate Local Government Committee . She served on two interim committees , the Water Resources Review Committee and the Legislative Health Benefit Exchange Implementation Review Committee until the end of the 2012 legislative session .

In addition to her responsibilities at the Colorado legislature , Roberts was appointed to the National Conference of State Legislatures ? (NCSL) Federal Deficit Reduction Task Force and , in August

2011 , was elected to NCSL ? s Executive Committee . She is the only Colorado legislator to serve on either of these committees .

= = = 2012 Legislative Session = = =

Senator Roberts proposed legislation at the start of session regarding the surety bond required for towing carriers in rural areas . SB12 @-@ 049 would have lowered the surety bond from \$ 50 @,@ 000 to \$ 10 @,@ 000 for local entities . The bill was assigned to the Senate Transportation Committee , but was postponed indefinitely after it was introduced . However , after the bill was killed , public upheaval caused Roberts to introduce a new bill , this time in the House , which resolved the same issue . HB12 @-@ 1347 passed the second time around with a resounding 98 @-@ 1 vote .

Senator Roberts was appointed to the National Conference of State Legislatures Budgets and Revenue Committee . In addition , she was re @-@ elected to the Executive Committee for NCSL . Senator Roberts was also awarded the Legislator of the Year Award for the 2012 legislative session by the Economic Development Council of Colorado .

During the 2012 legislative session , Roberts was award a handful of awards : 2012 Champion of Conservation Award from the Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts , the 2012 Pinnacle Award from the Colorado Farm Bureau , the 2012 Common Sense in the Courtroom Award from the Colorado Civil Justice League , and the 2012 Green Colorado Legislator of the Year Award . She was also honored to win the 2012 Legislator of the Year Award from the Colorado Economic Development Council .

Due to the wild fires in the state of Colorado in 2012 , Senator Roberts was elected as Chairwoman of the bipartisan Lower North Fork Fire Commission , which convened during the interim and which proposed four pieces of legislation to address the threat of wildfire risk and damage in Colorado .

= = = 2013 Legislative Session = = =

Roberts was appointed to serve on the Senate Health and Human Services Committee .

= = = 2015 Legislative Session = = =

As state senator , Senator Roberts serves on several committees . She serves as Vice Chair of the Agriculture , Natural Resources and Energy Committee as well as Chair of the Judiciary Committee . Senator Roberts also serves on the Committee Legal Services , Water Resources Review Committee , Joint Judiciary Committee and the Joint Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee .

= = Legislative Initiatives = =

= = = COYAC = = =

In 2008 , Senator Roberts sponsored HB08 @-@ 1157 , a bill that sought to create a state legislative youth advisory council in Colorado . Prior to the 2008 legislative session , Senator Roberts had met with a group of high school students from Cortez , Durango , and Pagosa Springs in order to gauge the scope of the soon to be legislation as well as the group that would form after the legislation had been passed . The bill was passed in May 2008 , creating the Colorado Youth Advisory Council also known as COYAC .

During the 2012 legislative session , Roberts brought forth legislation that stemmed from her youth council initiative as well : HJR12 @-@ 1004 , a resolution that recognized the struggle Colorado faces surrounding teen suicides . This joint resolution sought to identify teen suicides and focus on suicide prevention as well , particularly via COYAC and through COYAC initiatives .

