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Utah leaders praise former Gov. Rampton

By **Steve Fidel**

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Calvin Rampton jovially reflected recently that he had outlived most of his political and professional associates.

And while he did outlive many, a number of them provided glowing comments today about the former governor who passed away Sunday.

"His leadership and service brought enormous success and pride to the people of Utah. We are all beneficiaries of his legacy," said Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. "Mary Kaye and I express our heartfelt condolences to the Rampton family. The entire state of Utah joins them in mourning the loss of one of the finest public servants we have ever known."

The governor has authorized both the American and Utah state flags be lowered to half staff in honor of the former governor at state-owned facilities immediately until sunset on the day of interment.

Former Salt Lake Mayor Ted Wilson said he'll miss "old Cal."

Wilson said Rampton was "perhaps the most powerful and effective governor this state has ever had."

Rampton revamped the public and higher education system in the state, pushing what, at the time, was the largest construction bond issued to greatly expand several campuses, including the University of Utah.

"He worked so well with members of both parties, he was extraordinary," said Wilson, who after his mayorship ran the U.'s Hinckley Institute of Politics.

"He was an amazingly kind man. A great sense of humor, who told wonderful stories."

Wilson said he often attended what have become known as the "old Democrats" luncheons at the Alta Club, a downtown private club. "And he would regale us with these stories of old-day politics. He was a joy."

With the death of Rampton, Utah now has three living former governors, all Republicans: Norm Bangerter, Mike Leavitt and Olene Walker.

Leavitt, who is now the U.S. secretary of Health and Human Services, said, "Few Utahns will endure like Calvin Rampton. He will be remembered as an astute governor, towering community leader and a man of remarkable charm and good wit.

"I sought his wisdom regularly and came to count on candid, experience-laced thoughts, generally weaved into a good story," Leavitt said in a statement. "Utah won't be the same without him but it is clearly better because of him."

Norma Matheson, wife of former Utah Gov. Scott Matheson, said of Rampton, "He had a tremendous influence, not only on the state but so many individuals, particularly on our family."

She said it was Rampton who talked her into letting her husband, Scott, run for governor. "I told him on inaugural day, 'If it doesn't work out it's all your fault.' He just laughed. It's the end of an era, isn't it?"

"Fortunately (Scott Matheson Jr.) and I went out to see him on Friday. I'm just grateful we took that opportunity because he was still alert and very conversational. Of course we talked about his favorite subject and ours: politics. He still had a few really pointed comments to make. He's such a bright, intelligent, wonderful man. It's a great loss, of course."

Rep. Jim Matheson, D-Utah, said Rampton took a "practical, commonsense approach to getting things done for

Utah.

"Through a number of initiatives, he put Utah on a course of determining its own destiny, rather than letting outsiders set the agenda," Rep. Matheson said in a statement. "He planted many of the seeds that are bearing fruit for Utahns to this day."

Jack Gallivan, former Salt Lake Tribune publisher and one of Rampton's close friends, said Rampton was "by any measurement Utah's most accomplished governor. His personality, vision and leadership brought about by-partisan government to dramatically advance the social, cultural and economic welfare of the state. Utah has lost its favorite son."

Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff also expressed his sympathy to Rampton's family.

"Governor Rampton was a gentleman as a public servant, prosecutor and private-practice attorney," Shurtleff said in a statement. "I was inspired to dedicate my professional life to the practice of law while interning at his law firm, Jones Waldo, Holbrook and McDonough. Governor Rampton was a great example to me and to all Utahns of a life lived well through service and a commitment to the rule of law, justice, equality, fundamental fairness and individual worth. He will be remembered and honored for generations."

A statement from the Hinckley Institute of Politics said Rampton, a member of the institute's Hall of Fame, "embodied the Hinckley Institute's vision of 'every student a politician,' demonstrating extraordinary personal resolve and dedication by running six unsuccessful campaigns prior to winning the governorship in 1964.

"While in office Gov. Rampton was a tireless advocate of public and higher education and provided insightful leadership in the areas of economic development and tourism. He was known for honest and thoughtful leadership — demanding consideration of and respect for opposing viewpoints. ... Utah has lost an incredible public servant, friend and advocate. He will be greatly missed."

Rep. Chris Cannon, R-Utah, echoed that sentiment in a statement. "Governor Rampton will always occupy an important place in Utah history. We honor his service and mourn his passing."

While he was not living in the state while Rampton was governor, Sen. Bob Bennett, R-Utah, said he did have business here and dealt with Rampton often. "I had enormous respect for his professionalism and competence, and came to value his friendship. Utah has lost one its finest sons, as well as one of its best public servants."

Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, said Rampton is someone he respected "at a personal level. He attended Davis High with members of my family, and I was acquainted with him and his extended family.

"I had the opportunity on several occasions to have private conversations where he would retell some of his favorite political stories from the good old days. He was a fascinating and dedicated public servant — a unique character in Utah politics who will long be remembered."

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, called Rampton a man "who truly cared about his family, his community, and our great state. He was greatly respected by all who had the pleasure of working with him, and I have always appreciated his integrity, his simple candor, and his dedication to good government. He made friends from both sides of the aisle, and you could always count on him to roll up his sleeves and get the job done."

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