



# Members of the U.S. Congress Who Have Died of Other Than Natural Causes While in Office

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## Summary

This report provides an alphabetical list of the 61 Members of Congress who have died of other than natural causes while serving in the U.S. House of Representatives or the U.S. Senate. Each entry includes party affiliation, the name of the state that the Member represented, dates of service, chamber in which the Member served, and cause of death.

The report does not presume to be a complete list of Members who have died from other than natural causes while in office. CRS relied exclusively on available sources, and the report reflects only the extent to which they indicated the cause of a Member's death.

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**Table 1. Members of the U.S. Congress Who Have Died of Other Than Natural Causes While in Office**

Member	Party	State	Dates of Service <sup>a</sup>	Chamber	Cause of Death and Date of Death
ANDERSON, Carl Carey	D	OH	03/04/1909-10/01/1912	House	Died in an automobile accident near Fostoria, OH on 10/01/1912.
BAKER, Edward Dickinson	R	IL	03/04/1845-01/15/1847 03/04/1849-03/03/1851	House	Killed in the Battle of Balls Bluff, VA on 10/21/1861.
	R	OR	10/21/1860-10/21/1861	Senate	
BATES, George Joseph	R	MA	01/03/1937-11/01/1949	House	Died in an airplane accident at Washington National Airport on 11/01/1949.
BEGICH, Nicholas	D	AL	01/03/1971-10/16/1972	House	Died in a plane crash in the Alaskan wilderness on 10/16/1972.
BOGGS, Thomas Hale	D	LA	01/03/1941-01/03/1943 01/03/1947-10/16/1972	House	Died in a plane crash in the Alaskan wilderness on 10/16/1972.
BONO, Sonny	R	CA	01/03/1995-01/05/1998	House	Died in a skiing accident at Lake Tahoe, NV on 01/05/1998.
BOYLE, Charles Augustus	D	IL	01/03/1955-11/04/1959	House	Died in an automobile accident in Chicago, IL on 11/04/1959.
BRANDEGEE, Frank B.	R	CT	11/05/1902-05/10/1905 05/10/1905-10/14/1924	House Senate	Committed suicide in Washington, DC on 10/14/1924.
BRODERICK, David Colbreth	D	CA	03/04/1857-09/16/1859	Senate	Mortally wounded by David S. Terry, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of California, in a duel in San Francisco on 09/13/1859 and died on 09/16/1859.
BYRON, William Devereux	D	MD	01/03/1939-02/27/1941	House	Died in an airplane crash in Jonesboro, GA on 02/27/1941.
CHAPMAN, Virgil Mundy	D	KY	03/04/1925-03/03/1929 03/04/1931-01/03/1949 01/03/1949-03/08/1951	House Senate	Died from injuries received in an automobile accident in Bethesda, MD on 03/08/1951.
CHICKERING, Charles Addison	R	NY	03/04/1893-02/13/1900	House	Died from injuries received in an accidental fall from a window of the Grand Union Hotel in New York City on 02/13/1900.
CILLEY, Johnathan	D <sup>b</sup>	ME	03/04/1837-02/24/1838	House	Killed in a duel on the Marlboro Pike, near Washington, DC by William J. Graves, a Representative from Kentucky on 02/24/1838.
CLARKE, John Davenport	R	NY	03/04/1921-03/03/1925 03/04/1927-11/05/1933	House	Died as a result of an automobile collision near Delhi, NY on 11/05/1933.
COFFEY, Robert Lewis, Jr.	D	PA	01/03/1949-04/20/1949	House	Died in an airplane accident in Albuquerque, NM on 04/20/1949.
COLLINS, George W.	D	IL	11/03/1970-12/08/1972	House	Died in an airplane crash in Chicago, IL on 12/08/1972.
CUTTING, Bronson Murray	R	NM	12/29/1927-12/06/1928 03/04/1929-05/06/1935	Senate	Died in an airplane crash near Atlanta, MO on 05/06/1935.
DITTER, John William	R	PA	03/04/1933-11/21/1943	House	Died in an airplane crash near Columbia, PA on 11/21/1943.

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EAST, John P.	R	NC	01/03/1981-06/29/1986	Senate	Committed suicide in Greenville, NC on 06/29/1986.
ELLIOTT, Douglas	R	PA	04/26/1960-06/19/1960	House	Committed suicide in Horse Valley, PA on 06/19/1960.
ERVIN, Joseph W.	D	NC	01/03/1945-12/25/1945	House	Committed suicide in Washington, DC on 12/25/1945.
FOLGER, Alonzo Dillard	D	NC	01/03/1939-04/30/1941	House	Died in an automobile accident in Mount Airy, NC on 04/30/1941.
GANLY, James Vincent	D	NY	03/04/1919-03/03/1921 03/04/1923-09/07/1923	House	Died in an automobile accident in New York City on 09/07/1923.
HAMILTON, Cornelius Springer	R	OH	03/04/1867-12/22/1867	House	Killed by an insane son in Marysville, OH on 12/22/1867.
HEINKE, George Henry	R	NE	01/03/1939-01/02/1940	House	Died as a result of injuries received in an automobile accident near Morrilton, AR while en route to Washington DC to attend the opening of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> session of the 76 <sup>th</sup> Congress on 01/02/1940.
HEINZ, H. John III	R	PA	11/02/1971-01/03/1977 01/03/1977-04/04/1991	House Senate	Died in a mid-air collision between his charter plane and a helicopter over a suburban Philadelphia schoolyard on 04/04/1991.
HINDS, James	R	AR	06/22/1868-10/22/1868	House	Assassinated near Indian Bays, AR on 10/22/1868.
HUNT, Lester C.	D	WY	01/03/1949-06/19/1954	Senate	Committed suicide in Washington, DC on 06/19/1954.
HUSTING, Paul Oscar	D	WI	03/04/1915-10/21/1917	Senate	Died accidentally while duck hunting on Rush Lake, near Picketts, WI on 10/21/1917.
JOHNSTON, Charles Clement	D <sup>c</sup>	VA	03/04/1831-06/17/1832	House	Drowned near one of the docks in Alexandria, VA on 06/17/1832.
JOHNSTON, Josiah Stoddard	D	LA	03/04/1821-03/03/1823 01/15/1824-05/19/1833	House Senate	Killed by an explosion on the steamboat <i>Lioness</i> on the Red River in Louisiana on 05/19/1833.
KAYNOR, William Kirk	R	MA	03/04/1929-12/20/1929	House	Died in an airplane accident near Washington, DC on 12/20/1929.
KENDALL, Samuel A.	R	PA	03/04/1919-01/08/1933	House	Committed suicide in his office in the House Office Building on 01/08/1933.
KENNEDY, Robert F.	D	NY	03/03/1965-06/06/1968	Senate	Assassinated in Los Angeles, CA on 06/06/1968.
KINNARD, George L.	D	IN	03/04/1833-11/26/1836	House	Died from injuries received in an explosion on the steamer <i>Flora</i> on the Ohio River on 11/26/1836.
LANE, James H.	D R	IN KS	03/04/1853-03/03/1855 04/04/1861-07/11/1866	House Senate	Committed suicide near Ft. Leavenworth, KS on 07/11/1866.
LANHAM, Henderson Lovelace	D	GA	01/03/1947-11/10/1957	House	Killed when his automobile collided with a train at a crossing in Rome, GA on 11/10/1957.
LELAND, George T. (Mickey)	D	TX	01/03/1979-08/07/1989	House	Died in a plane crash on 08/07/1989 in Ethiopia while on a fact-finding tour to study hunger among refugees.

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LITTON, Jerry	D	MO	03/03/1973-08/03/1976	House	Died in a plane crash en route to Kansas City, MO on 08/03/1976, on the night of his victory in the 1976 Democratic U.S. Senate primary.
LONG, Huey Pierce	D	LA	01/25/1932-09/10/1935	Senate	Assassinated in the State Capitol Building, Baton Rouge, LA on 09/08/1935; died on 09/10/1935.
LUNDEEN, Ernest	R <sup>d</sup>	MN	03/04/1917-03/03/1919 03/04/1933-01/03/1937 01/03/1937-08/31/1940	House Senate	Died in an airplane crash near Lovettsville, VA on 08/31/1940.
McCORMICK, Joseph Medill	R	IL	03/04/1917-03/03/1919 03/04/1919-02/25/1925	House Senate	Committed suicide in Washington, DC on 02/25/1925 <sup>e</sup>
McDONALD, Larry	D	GA	01/03/1975-09/01/1983	House	Died in crash of Korean Airlines flight shot down by a Russian fighter plane on 09/01/1983.
MILLER, Clement Woodnutt	D	CA	01/03/1959-10/07/1962	House	Died in an airplane crash near Eureka, CA on 10/07/1962.
MILLS, William	R	MD	05/27/1971-05/24/1973	House	Committed suicide near Easton, MD on 05/24/1973.
MONTGOMERY, John Gallagher	D	PA	03/04/1857-04/24/1857	House	Died on 04/24/1857, presumably from the effects of food poisoning contracted while staying at the National Hotel in Washington, DC.
MURPHY, Richard Louis	D	IA	03/04/1933-07/16/1936	Senate	Died in an automobile accident near Chippewa Falls, WI on 07/16/1936.
PETTIS, Jerry L.	R	CA	01/03/1967-02/14/1975	House	Died in a plane crash in Banning, San Bernardino County, CA on 02/14/1975.
PETTIS, Spencer Darwin	D	MO	03/04/1829-08/28/1831	House	During the campaign of 1830, his opinions on the U.S. Bank issue precipitated a quarrel and subsequently a duel with Major Thomas Biddle, and both fell mortally wounded on 08/28/1831.
PINCKNEY, John McPherson	D	TX	11/17/1903-04/24/1905	House	Assaulted and killed at Hempstead, TX on 04/24/1905.
QUITMAN, John Anthony	D	MS	03/04/1855-07/17/1858	House	Died on 07/17/1858, presumably from the effects of food poisoning contracted in 1857 while staying at the National Hotel in Washington, DC.
RYAN, Leo J.	D	CA	01/03/1973-11/18/1978	House	Died from gunshot wounds received while visiting an American religious commune in Guyana, South America on 11/18/1978.
SCHALL, Thomas David	R	MN	03/04/1915-03/03/1925 03/04/1925-12/22/1935	House Senate	Died after being struck by an automobile in Washington, DC on 12/22/1935.
SMITH, Larkin	R	MS	01/03/1989-08/13/1989	House	Died in a plane crash in the DeSoto National Forest, MS on 08/13/1989.
STERLING, John Allen	R	IL	03/04/1903-03/03/1913 03/04/1915-10/17/1918	House	Died as a result of an automobile accident near Pontiac, IL on 10/17/1918.
SULLIVAN, Timothy Daniel	D	NY	03/04/1903-07/27/1906 03/04/1913-08/31/1913	House	Killed by a locomotive near Pelham Parkway, NY on 08/31/1913.

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THOMPSON, Theo Ashton	D	LA	01/03/1953-07/01/1965	House	Died in an automobile accident in Gastonia, NC on 07/01/1965.
WEDEMEYER, William Walter	R	MI	03/04/1911-01/02/1913	House	Accidentally drowned in the harbor of Colon, Panama on 01/02/1913.
WELLSTONE, Paul David	D	MN	01/3/1991-10/25/2002	Senate	Died along with his wife , their daughter, two campaign staffers, and a Minnesota Democratic party official in a plane crash in Eveleth, MN on 10/25/02.
WICKLIFFE, Robert Charles	D	LA	03/04/1909-06/11/1912	House	Killed by a train while walking on a railroad track in Washington, DC on 06/11/1912.
ZIONCHECK, Marion	D	WA	03/04/1933-08/07/1936	House	Jumped from an office building in Seattle, WA on 08/07/1936.

**Sources:** Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, Ann Arbor, MI; *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1998*; various editions of *Weekly Reports*, published by Congressional Quarterly, Inc.; and various newspaper articles.

- a. Note that the date of the Member's death is the same as the last date of his service.
- b. Rep. Cilley was a Jacksonian Democrat.
- c. Rep. Johnston was a States Rights Democrat.
- d. Rep., later Sen. Lundeen, was a member of the Farmer Labor Party when elected to the House in 1933 and the Senate in 1937.
- e. Sen. McCormick's death was initially not ruled a suicide. See Kristie Miller, *Ruth Hanna McCormick, A Life in Politics 1880-1944* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), p. 151.

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