HIV-Positive New York Lawmaker Philip Reed Dead at 59

November 10, 2008

Philip Reed—an openly gay, HIV-positive member of the New York City Council—died November 6 at St. Luke's-Roosevelt City Hospital Center from complications of pneumonia resulting from leukemia, *The New York Times* reports. He was 59.

According to the article, Reed became the first openly gay black member of the City Council when he was elected in 1997, representing East Harlem and Manhattan Valley, in addition to parts of the Upper West Side and the South Bronx. He was involved in the 1969 Stonewall riots—viewed as the birth of the gay rights movement—and he spent 10 years in San Francisco as a gay political activist while working as a salesman for the Otis Elevator Company.

Reed was diagnosed with HIV in 1981—the year it was first detected—and ran a service program in Brooklyn for people living with the virus before he became a Democratic district leader in the late 1980s. He fought health problems for years afterward, completing chemotherapy for multiple myeloma—a bone marrow cancer—in 1997. The following year, Reed graced the cover of *POZ*.

"Like many New Yorkers, I lost a friend yesterday when former New York City Councilman Phil Reed died, but the entire city lost a passionate advocate for important public causes," said New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg in a November 7 statement. "While Phil and I didn't agree on every issue, we worked together to craft bold AIDS policies, fight childhood asthma and—once—put on a pretty good Inner Circle Show. If it weren't for Phil Reed, we would never have been able to move the Department of Education next to City Hall, which has been a key part of our ability to introduce accountability into our schools and turn around a system that had failed our children for generations. Phil's legacy will live on in the results of his work, and my thoughts and prayers are with his family and loved ones."

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