

Judy Baar Topinka

January 16, 1944 – December 10, 2014

Illinois State Comptroller



Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka (Republican) was a trailblazer in Illinois government. Known for her common sense approach and fiscal responsibility that appealed to voters, Topinka was the first woman in Illinois history elected to two state constitutional offices. On Nov. 8, 1994, she was the first woman elected Illinois state treasurer and the first woman to hold that office for three consecutive terms.

Topinka began her public service in 1980, winning a seat in the Illinois House. Serving two terms as a state representative positioned her for a successful bid to the state Senate in 1984, where she served for a decade before being elected treasurer. She was the first woman to serve as state Republican

chairman and the first woman to become the GOP's nominee for governor in 2006. Topinka was elected to her first term as state comptroller in 2010.

A recognized and respected fiscal conservative and taxpayer watchdog, Topinka set a standard for state government transparency. She earned a reputation for straight talk and demanded accountability from taxing bodies. Paving the way for women in public office, Topinka was a strong and early supporter of women's rights. As a proud military parent, she attended and often hosted events honoring service men and women and their families. She was a supporter of gay marriage, was pro-choice and worked closely with unions. She was a devoted animal lover.

Prior to her career in public service, Topinka was a reporter and editor for Suburban Life Newspapers. Her achievements as a journalist and local leader earned her awards from more than 250 civic, business, professional and social service organizations. She belonged to more than 60 business and professional organizations, including the City Club of Chicago, Government Finance Officers Association and the West Suburban Chapter of the Alpha Gamma Delta Sorority.

Topinka was born in 1944 in Riverside and earned her B.S. degree in 1966 from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. She died Dec. 10, 2014, at age 70 before the start of her second term as comptroller. She is survived by her son, Joseph; daughter-in-law, Christina; and granddaughter, Alexandra Faith.

