

Maryland's first black congressman dies

by UPI

BALTIMORE - The first black elected to represent Maryland in the U.S. Congress, Parren J. Mitchell, has died in a Baltimore hospital at the age of 85.

Family members said he died of complications of pneumonia at Greater Baltimore Medical Center after living at a nursing home for several years after suffering a series of strokes, The Baltimore Sun reported Tuesday.

Mitchell was elected in 1970 to the first of his eight terms in Congress, and was the younger brother of Clarence Mitchell, Washington lobbyist for the NAACP in the 1960s and 1970s, the Sun reported. He was also a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

His time in Washington focused on civil rights and fighting to see black-owned businesses got their share of tax money spent on public works projects.

In 1950, he applied for admission to the graduate program at the University of Maryland, College Park, but was turned down by the college president, who said it would be "inadvisable" for a black to enroll there, the Sun said. He sued and won, and became the first black to enroll in the school's graduate program.

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