

REFERENCE TITLE: Sandra Day O'Connor; death resolution

State of Arizona
Senate
Fifty-sixth Legislature
Second Regular Session
2024

SCR 1005

Introduced by

Senators Petersen: Alston, Bennett, Bolick, Bravo, Burch, Carroll, Diaz,
Epstein, Farnsworth, Gabaldón, Kavanagh, Kerr, Marsh, Mesnard, Miranda,
Shamp, Shope, Sundareshan, Wadsack

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

ON THE DEATH OF THE HONORABLE SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 Former Arizona State Senator and United States Supreme Court Justice
2 Sandra Day O'Connor passed away on December 1, 2023 in Phoenix, Arizona,
3 at the age of 93.

4 From simple beginnings in Arizona's ranching country to historic
5 service in the Arizona State Senate and as the first female justice on the
6 United States Supreme Court, Justice O'Connor earned her rightful place in
7 the history of this state and nation. She was born in 1930 in El Paso,
8 Texas, and spent her early years in Arizona on the remote Lazy B Ranch
9 founded by her grandfather in the 1880s, where she displayed a penchant
10 for hard work. When she reached school age, she lived with her
11 grandmother and attended school in El Paso during the school year and
12 continued to spend summers working on the ranch.

13 After graduation from high school, Justice O'Connor earned both
14 undergraduate and law degrees from Stanford University. She graduated
15 third in her law school class of 102 students in 1952, yet experienced
16 firsthand the reluctance of law firms to hire women as attorneys when her
17 only job offer was that of a legal secretary. Justice O'Connor declined
18 the secretarial position and instead embarked on a career in public
19 service as a deputy county attorney in California. She realized early on
20 her enjoyment of public service and she continued in that realm almost
21 exclusively for the remainder of her career.

22 Even when Justice O'Connor became a full-time mother to her three
23 sons, she was active in numerous worthwhile volunteer endeavors, including
24 writing questions for the Arizona bar exam, helping to establish the
25 Arizona bar's lawyer referral service, serving as a member of state and
26 local commissions and committees and volunteering with the Arizona State
27 Hospital and the Salvation Army. She continued her public service in 1965
28 when she was hired as an assistant Arizona attorney general. In 1969, she
29 was appointed to the Arizona State Senate went on to be elected to the
30 Senate in 1970 and 1972. She was selected by her peers to serve as
31 Majority Leader of the Arizona State Senate in 1972, becoming the first
32 woman to serve as majority leader in a state legislature.

33 Justice O'Connor's judicial career began in 1974 when she was
34 elected as a judge on the Maricopa County Superior Court, and she was
35 appointed to the Arizona Court of Appeals in 1979. Justice O'Connor made
36 history in 1981 when President Ronald Reagan appointed her to the United
37 States Supreme Court.

38 As the Court's 102nd justice, Justice O'Connor displayed a solid
39 understanding of separation of powers and federalism that had its roots in
40 her service in all branches of government. Throughout nearly twenty-five
41 years on the Supreme Court, Justice O'Connor served with distinction and
42 sought to interpret the Constitution with careful and restrained
43 reasoning. She established herself as a principled and independent
44 thinker and demonstrated diligence and integrity in all her efforts.

1 In 2006, Justice O'Connor retired from the Supreme Court, in part to
2 care for her ailing husband. Yet she remained active for years in such
3 worthwhile endeavors as the Iraq Study Group, the American Bar
4 Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative, and she served
5 on the boards of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, the
6 National Constitution Center and the William H. Rehnquist Center. Justice
7 O'Connor founded iCivics in 2009, a web-based nonprofit that provides
8 educational games to middle school students to teach about the three
9 branches of government and the relationship between the federal government
10 and the states. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom that
11 same year in recognition of her lifetime accomplishments.

12 Justice O'Connor distinguished herself as an outstanding Arizonan
13 and American, and it is with gratitude that we honor her tremendous record
14 of service to our state and nation. She will be greatly missed by her
15 family, her many friends and her peers and colleagues around the country.
16 Therefore

17 Be it resolved by the Senate of the State of Arizona, the House of
18 Representatives concurring:

19 That the Members of the Legislature express their deepest sympathies
20 at the passing of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and extend their condolences
21 to her surviving family members.