



Catherine A. Costa

March 21, 1926 - June 27, 2025

Catherine Aurora Costa, known to her family as “Rory” and Cathy to others, passed away peacefully on Friday, June 27, 2025 at Medford Leas. She was 99.

Born of humble roots in Brooklyn, NY, the daughter of Sicilian immigrants, the late Salvatore and Matilde (Giumpocaro) Bravo. Cathy was one of 8 children, a graduate of Lafayette High School; Burlington County College & Edison College; and had her stockbroker’s and real estate licenses. She married Fortunato “Joe” Costa and moved to Burlington County in 1958 for his job at RCA Aerospace (now Lockheed-Martin).

Catherine had a political career spanning five decades. Her strong faith gave her the strength and desire to enter into the public arena where she could serve the people. Catherine’s mother instilled in her a love for reading and a thirst for knowledge. When she moved to Levittown - later named Willingboro, there was no public library, so in 1959 she became a Township Library Board Trustee and founded the Willingboro Library. From there, a lifetime of service to her community began. Inspired by John F. Kennedy, she got involved in politics, and joined the campaign for his presidency when he appeared at the Willingboro Plaza in 1960. In 1962 she served as Vice Chairman of the Willingboro Democratic Party and served as its chairman from 1963 until 1970. In 1964 she was appointed by Governor Richard Hughes to be a State of

NJ Youth Commissioner until 1968. She served as Member and Chair of the Willingboro Zoning Board from 1969 - 1974. Catherine was the first woman elected to the Burlington County Board of Freeholders and served from 1972 - 1984; serving as its Deputy Director in 1974 and Director in 1975. She was also Director of Administration, Transportation, Finance, Public Affairs, County Services, Law & Courts as well as Consumer Affairs where she was well known for "Cathy's Consumer Corner", and operated a weekly radio station on consumer news. She served on the Burlington County Soil Conservation District from 1972 until 2010. She was the first woman to be elected State President of the New Jersey Association of Conservation Districts, and that made her the first woman Soil Conservation District State President in the United States. From 1982 - 1984 she served in the New Jersey State General Assembly and was a member of the following committees: Revenue, Finance & Appropriations; Joint Appropriations; Capitol Planning Sub-Committee; and NJ State Commission on Aging.

From 1984 - 1991 she served in the NJ State Senate where she was the Assistant Majority Leader. She served as Chair of the following Committees: Children's Services; Senate Aging; Casino Revenue Fund Study; and Alcoholic Beverage Control Study. She served as Vice-Chair of the following committees: Senate Energy & Environment; Revenue, Finance & Appropriations; and Joint Appropriations. She was a member of the following committees: State Government; Select Committee on Veterans Services; NJ Commission on Automobile Insurance Reform Act; Commission to Study Services for Hearing Impaired Children; and the Missing Children Commission.

She was a trail blazer among women, though she thought of it as God's plan for her to serve others. She was the first woman to be elected to the Burlington County Board of Freeholders. She was the first Italian-American Woman to be elected to the New Jersey Senate where she served for 7 years. She was also the first NJ Woman Senator to be Assistant Majority Leader in the history of the State of New Jersey. She was the first woman to serve in the

Assembly and Senate as well as becoming the Director of the Division of Alcohol & Beverage Control in 1990. She was the first woman to serve as Director of the NJ Alcohol Beverage Control Division, and as Commissioner of Amusement Games. She was also a National Conservation Foundation Trustee.

In 1991 she was the Northeast Chair of the National Conference of State Liquor Administrators and in 1992 served as 3rd Vice President to the National Conference of State Liquor Administrators. All her many positions and awards are too numerous to include.

Before and during her political career, she worked in several fields, starting out in banking as a teller at Williamsburg Bank in Manhattan, later Sarah Coventry jewelry sales, and more recently a licensed realtor and a stock-broker.

In her spare time, she enjoyed traveling, performing, conversations in English and Italian, music, dance, swimming, walking, religion, painting, quilting, sewing, and crocheting. Most importantly, she loved her faith, family and having had the opportunity to help so many people. She was always active in her churches: in Willingboro, at Corpus Christi, she taught religious education and maintained the altar weekly with the Altar & Rosary Society. In Mt Laurel, at St. John Neumann, she was active in the choir and loved performing.

The wife of the late Joe Costa, she is survived by 3 children and their spouses: Nicholas Costa (Denise) of Mt. Laurel, Ted Costa (Lina) of Hainesport, and Nadine Haines (Bill) of Medford. She is also survived by her grandchildren: Nicholas II (Kyla), Danielle (Maurizio), Christina (Dan), Corinne (Josh), Ted (Alexis), Matthew, Joseph (Savannah), Michael (Daina), Sara (Eric) and Victoria (Mike), Stefanie (Kevin), Becca (Jeremy), William III

(Raven), and 19 great grandchildren with more on the way as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

Relatives and friends may attend her viewing on Wednesday evening, July 9th from 6-8pm and on Thursday, July 10th from 10-11am at St. Mary of the Lakes Catholic Church, 40 Jackson Rd., Medford. Mass of Christian Burial will be Celebrated on Thursday, July 10th at 11:00am at St. Mary of the Lakes. Interment at General Doyle Military Cemetery will be held privately.

In lieu of flowers, contributions in her memory may be made to St. Mary of the Lakes Church, 40 Jackson Road, Medford NJ 08055 or St. Jude's Hospital for Children or the charity of your choice.

Watch Mrs. Costa's memorial video here: <https://www.tributeslides.com/tributes/show/RC8H994H744HJNYR>

Previous Events

Viewing

JUL 9. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

St. Mary of the Lakes R.C. Church
40 Jackson Road
Medford, NJ

Visitation

JUL 10. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Mary of the Lakes R.C. Church
40 Jackson Road
Medford, NJ

Mass of Christian Burial

JUL 10. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Mary of the Lakes R.C. Church
40 Jackson Road
Medford, NJ

Tribute Wall

RS

“ Catherine “Aurora” Costa a very special aunt.
She lead an exemplary life, we are all so proud of her.
She was the kindness , most sincere, strong woman!
Now it is time to go back to your roots with your family.
Enjoy heaven. !!!
With much love,
Rosalind and John

Rosalind Santimauro - July 09, 2025 at 07:45 PM

KB

“ Karen B. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Catherine A. Costa.

Karen B. - July 08, 2025 at 10:12 AM

HL

“ Howard & Lydia Lambersky planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Catherine A. Costa.

Howard & Lydia Lambersky - July 08, 2025 at 08:53 AM

HL

“ Howard & Lydia Lambersky purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Catherine A. Costa.



Howard & Lydia Lambersky - July 08, 2025 at 08:53 AM

LP

“ Love, Joe and Margie Passalacqua planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Catherine A. Costa.

Love, Joe and Margie Passalacqua - July 07, 2025 at 08:08 AM

LP

“ Love, Joe and Margie Passalacqua purchased the *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* for the family of Catherine A. Costa.



Love, Joe and Margie Passalacqua - July 07, 2025 at 08:08 AM