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## Before He Was 'Hizzoner' of New York City, Koch Prepped for Battle in the U.S. House

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Although Ed Koch's legacy will be rightfully traced through Gracie Mansion, the iconic former mayor of New York City paid his dues as part of Gotham's rough-and-tumble Democratic party. Koch, who died Feb. 1 at age 88, served five terms in the House before he was elected "hizzoner" of the Big Apple for three terms.

Born in the Bronx, Koch studied at City College of New York and got his law degree from New York University after serving as a combat infantryman during World War II.

He got involved as a Democratic district leader of Greenwich Village in the early 1960s and was a delegate to the 1964 Democratic National Convention. After being elected to the New York City Council in 1966, he successfully ran as a Democrat-Liberal for the 91st Congress, succeeding Theodore Kupferman and representing New York for four full terms, before being elected mayor in 1977 in the middle of his fifth House term.

In Congress, Koch was known for fighting communism and advancing human rights causes from his seat on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Relations. In 1976, he proposed that the United States cut off foreign aid to Uruguay in light of human rights violations. In 2004, journalist John Dinges revealed that the CIA that year learned Uruguayan intelligence officers discussed having Chile's secret police assassinate Koch but didn't take action or warn Koch for more than two months.

Koch also worked to reduce the weight of trucks allowed on interstate highways, develop home health alternatives to nursing homes, improve auditing of federal contractors and provide incentives to the Soviet Union to allow more religious freedom. Bob Weiner, Koch's former legislative assistant, recalled last week that his former boss never hesitated to take on difficult issues and was "amazingly effective and studious."

Some of his most memorable exchanges were with fellow Democratic Rep. Bella Abzug of New York. Koch antagonized his colleague by supporting Bess Myerson over Abzug for the mayor's job before deciding to run himself. "It was a case of two liberals locking horns," Weiner wrote in a recollection last week that he distributed to the press.

The 1977 mayoral campaign solidified Koch's reputation for pugnaciousness, as he beat out Abzug, then-Mayor Abe Beam and Mario Cuomo on his way to a three-term tenure.



Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call File Photo

In the House, Koch was known for fighting communism and human rights violations.

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