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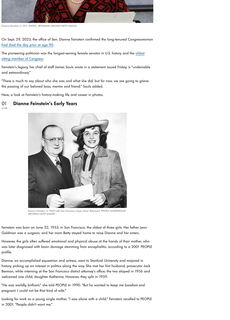
POLITICS

Dianne Feinstein's Life and Career in Photos

Remembering the incredible life and career of Dianne Feinstein who died at 90 years old on Sept. 28, 2023

By Kate Hagan and Virginia Chamlee | Published on September 29, 2023 | Updated EDT



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On Sept. 29, 2023, the office of Sen. Dianne Feinstein confirmed the long-beyond Congressman had died the day prior at age 90.

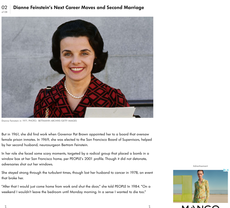
The pioneering politician was the longest-serving female senator in U.S. history and the other sitting member of Congress.

Feinstein's legacy, her chief of staff James Sauls wrote in a statement issued Friday, is "unbelievable and extraordinary."

"There is much to say about who she was and what she did, but for now, we are going to grieve the passing of our beloved boss, mentor and friend," Sauls added.

Here, a look at Feinstein's history-making life and career in photos.

01 Dianne Feinstein's Early Years



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Feinstein was born on June 22, 1933, in San Francisco, the oldest of three girls. Her father born Goldman was a surgeon, and her mom Betty stayed home to raise Dianne and her sisters.

Her father, who died when she was just a teenager, suffered physical abuse at the hands of their mother, who reportedly struggled with brain damage stemming from encephalitis, according to a 2001 PEOPLE profile.

Dianne, an accomplished equestrian and actress, went to Stanford University and majored in history, picking up an interest in politics along the way. She met her future first husband, prominent Jack Berman, while interning at the San Francisco district attorney's office. She was elected in 1956 and welcomed one daughter Katherine. However they split in 1959.

"He was socially brilliant," she told PEOPLE in 1990. "But he wanted to keep me barefoot and pregnant. I could not live that kind of life."

Looking for work as a young single mother, "I was alone with a child," Feinstein recalled to PEOPLE in 2001. "People didn't want me."

02 Dianne Feinstein's Next Career Moves and Second Marriage

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But in 1961, she did find work when Governor Pat Brown appointed her to a board that oversaw female prison inmates. In 1969, she was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, helped by her second husband, neurosurgeon Bertram Feinstein.

In her role she faced some scary moments, targeted by a radical group placed a bomb in a window box at her San Francisco home, per PEOPLE's 2001 profile. Though it did not detonate, otherwise she had no windows.

She stayed strong through the turbulent times, though her her husband to cancer in 1978, an event that broke her.

"After that I would just come home from work and shut the door," she told PEOPLE in 1984. "Or a weekend I wouldn't leave the bedroom until Monday morning. In a sense I wanted to die too."

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03 Dianne Feinstein with Harvey Milk and Taking Over as San Francisco Mayor

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While at work with the Board of Supervisors at San Francisco City Hall on Nov. 27, 1978, she sang out Feinstein over cut of her office to see colleague Harvey Milk — the city's first openly gay elected official — in a pool of blood. Looking for a pulse, his hand instead found a bullet hole.

Mayor George Moscone had also been shot, both men killed by disgruntled former board member Dan White. The murder of her comrades instantly made Feinstein acting mayor.

Covered in blood, she addressed reporters outside of city hall, saying, "We will carry on the best we possibly can."

In her 2001 PEOPLE profile, Feinstein reflected on the moment, saying, "I think back a lot to that day. I guess I learned I'm good in a crisis. I just keep going."

She would serve successfully as mayor until 1988, when she launched a failed bid for governor of California.

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04 Dianne Feinstein in the U.S. Senate

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In 1992, Feinstein won her race for Senate, a place she would stay until her death in 2023 (she had already announced she did not plan to run for another term in 2024).

According to her 2001 PEOPLE profile, her "second on Capitol Hill was clearly colored by her personal experiences." She was behind the 1994 assault weapons ban she backed in 1993 family bonds left, she pushed hard to bring attention to California's energy crisis and she served as a leading voice for the legalization of gay marriage in 2013.

As elected every term, she became the longest-serving female senator in U.S. history and eventually the oldest sitting member of Congress.

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05 Dianne Feinstein's Third Husband and Life as a Grandmother

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Following the death of her second husband, Feinstein eventually began dating banker Richard Blum, the two wed in 1990 and were together until his death from cancer in 2022.

"She has the ability to set out of clarity and purpose," Blum told PEOPLE in 2001. "That's one reason I fell in love."

As her pals Feinstein said at the time, Blum "gives me balance."

Her daughter Katherine, now a judge, went on to read Bill Morrow, and together the two had one daughter, Eliza.

Feinstein said her daughter "learned how to handle life much better than I did. For me it was much bumpier."

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06 Dianne Feinstein and the U.S. Presidents

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In her time in the Senate, Feinstein rocked with six U.S. presidents: George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Joe Biden.

In January of 2009, she became the first woman to open a U.S. presidential inauguration, doing so for Obama.

"We gather to ask another time in the solid stone of history," she said in her speech that day. "The freedom of people to choose its leaders is the root of liberty. ... Those who doubt the supremacy of freedom, who say that it is time for us to bow to the inevitability of a world ruled by non-violent struggles for justice and equality, like the one that made this day possible."

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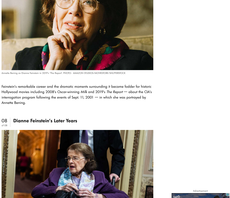
07 Dianne Feinstein in Pop Culture



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Feinstein's unmistakable voice made her a frequent impersonation, including by Saturday Night Live's Hillary Clinton. Her voice was also heard on Congress in 1994 and 2019 to deliver the Oath, interrupted program following the events of Sept. 11, 2001 — in which she was portrayed by Annette Bening.

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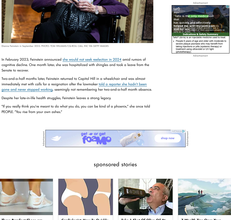
08 Dianne Feinstein's Later Years



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In February 2023, Feinstein announced she would not seek reelection in 2024 amid rumors of cognitive decline. One month later, she was hospitalized with shingles and took a leave from the Senate to recover.

Two out-of-staff months later, Feinstein returned to Capitol Hill in a wheelchair and was almost immediately met with calls for a resignation after the lawmaker told a reporter she hadn't been gone and never stepped outside, seemingly not remembering her two-and-a-half month absence.

Despite her time in this health struggles, Feinstein leaves a strong legacy.

"If you really think you're meant to do what you do, you can be kind of a phoenix," she once told PEOPLE. "You rise from your own ashes."

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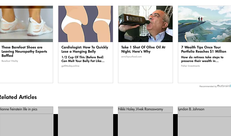

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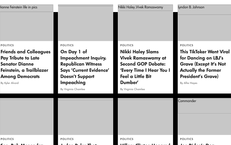

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