

# Edward Norton, lawyer whose tax flouting nearly cost wife a career in Congress, dies

August 28, 2014

Edward W. Norton, a lawyer and former government official whose failure to file local taxes for seven years nearly upended the political career of his then-wife, Eleanor Holmes Norton, in her first race for D.C. delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives, died Aug. 28 at a hospice center in Washington. He was 76.

The cause was colon cancer, said a son, John H. Norton.

Mr. Norton was an Ivy League-educated lawyer whose profile grew in tandem with his wife's. They wed in 1965 when he was a Navy officer stationed in Philadelphia, and the former Eleanor Holmes was a clerk for a federal judge in that city.



They later went to New York, where Mr. Norton worked at a prestigious law firm and became general counsel for the city's housing authority. Eleanor Norton made a national reputation as a fiery lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union and later chaired the New York City Commission on Human Rights.

In 1977, she was named by President Jimmy Carter to head the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. By that time, Mr. Norton had already started working as deputy general counsel at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. He became general counsel at the Small Business Administration in 1979.

He joined a private legal practice in Washington after Ronald Reagan was elected president in 1980. Starting in 1983, Mr. Norton served six years under Mayor Marion Barry as chairman of the D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics, gaining a reputation as a reformist who expunged inactive voters from the rolls.

In 1990, Eleanor Holmes Norton, then a Georgetown University law professor, entered the race for D.C. delegate after incumbent Walter E. Fauntroy decided to vacate the job to run for mayor. She was the front runner for much of the election, winning important endorsements against challenger and City Council member Betty Ann Kane.

Within days of the Democratic primary, news organizations, including The Washington Post, received an anonymous fax documenting the failure of the Nortons to pay \$10,755 in D.C. income tax in 1982. The amount had climbed to more than \$25,000 over seven years of penalties and interest.