

Cassidy, 64, lawyer, civil rights advocate

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Helen Cassidy, an appellate lawyer and proponent of racial equality and civil rights, died Saturday of lung cancer. She was 64.

"Unfortunately, historically large groups of people have been just written off," said her longtime friend, Betty Barnes, a retired college teacher. "That is what (Cassidy) was particularly fighting."

In a statement, her family said: "Helen was an advocate for equality for every person. She marched for civil rights in the 1960s, women's rights in the 1970s and gay rights in the 1980s."

Cassidy became the first chairwoman of the Texas Women's Political Caucus in 1971. She also was a board member of the National Organization for Women and president of its Houston chapter.

Cassidy was staff counsel for inmates of the Texas prison system and an administrative judge for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

For 11 years, she was chief staff attorney for the 14th Court of Appeals in Houston, which handles civil and criminal appeals from a multi-county area.

In 1998, after 15 years with the court, Cassidy joined Houston lawyer David W. Holman in practicing mostly civil appellate law. She later was of counsel with the former Houston law firm Storey, Moore & McCally before beginning a solo practice of general civil law. Cassidy also headed the appellate section of the State Bar of Texas and the criminal law and appellate practice sections of the Houston Bar Association.

Helen Lois Alexander Cassidy was born Nov. 22, 1940, in Celeste in Hunt County, the daughter of Athrell and Vera Alexander. She grew up in Commerce and graduated from high school there.

Cassidy graduated with high honors from Lamar University in 1963. She received a law degree from the University of Houston in 1975.