

**BURKS TO RETIRE FROM SENATE –
STATE SENATOR CHARLOTTE BURKS**

MONTEREY — State Senator Charlotte Burks (D-Monterey) has announced that she will retire at the end of her current term.

She will not seek re-election to serve the 15th District, which includes Cumberland, Jackson, Overton, Bledsoe, Putnam and White counties. The next election is scheduled for August 2014.



She is a native of Jackson County and owns a farm in Monterey where she raised her family and has resided for nearly 50 years. Burks has three daughters, 10 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. The only occupation she has ever known is that of a farmer.

“It has been an honor to represent the people of the 15th Senatorial District over the years,” Burks reflected. “I never imagined that I would ever serve in the state legislature, but it gave me a sense of direction and purpose that I needed after the loss of Tommy. It was a responsibility that I took seriously, and I am satisfied that I served the people of this district with honesty and integrity.”

She has served in the State Legislature since 1998. The people of the 15th District made her a part of Tennessee history by electing her as the first ever “write-in” candidate to the State Senate after the tragic death of her husband, State Senator Tommy Burks.

During her tenure in office, Burks has served on numerous committees, including ethics, commerce, labor, agriculture, education, government operations and the select committee on children and youth.

She has also received multiple awards and recognitions for her work as a State Senator. Much of her focus has been in the areas of education, domestic violence and issues concerning children. She has been an eight time recipient of the “Legislator of the Year” award from the Tennessee Coalition against Domestic and Sexual Violence for her work in those areas. She also received national recognition from the U.S. Attorney General’s Foundation for the Improvement of Justice.

Sen. Burks’ first efforts in Nashville focused on completing some of the work started by her late husband. He had been successful in getting a constitutional amendment on the state ballot for a “Victims Bill of Rights” which passed in the November 1998 election. Ironically, this was after he himself had become a victim of crime and lost his own life. She completed his work by drafting and passing the legislation that made the provisions of the amendment into law. She also passed a bill that allowed inmates in local jails to pick up litter on our state highways on which he had been working.

She has sponsored and passed many important pieces of her own legislation during her tenure in office. When asked what stands out in her mind as the most important legislation on which she worked, she replied, “My work on the fight against Meth in our state.”

She had tried unsuccessfully for three sessions to pass a law to regulate and limit the sale of over-the-counter drugs containing Ephedrine which is the main ingredient of Meth.

The attention caused by Sen. Burks’ efforts caused Governor Phil Bredesen to create a state Meth Task Force, of which Burks was a member. Legislation recommended by the task force and endorsed by the governor that was finally made into law contained all of her original recommendations and was made even stronger. The passage of this bill significantly reduced the production of meth across our state.

“I have tried to focus on the issues that are important to our families and our every day life,” Burks commented.

She has been an advocate for Tennessee’s families, as well as for education, affordable health care, senior assistance and for issues important to our rural communities. She served on the Domestic and Sexual Violence State Coordinating Council, the Creating Homes Initiative Task Force, the State Vocational Education Board, the Southern Regional Education Board and the state Victims of Crime Coordinating Council.

“Our family has a deep love and appreciation for the Upper Cumberland and its people,” Burks said. “We will forever be grateful for the kindness and support we have received. Thank you for allowing us to serve.”

To show her appreciation, Senator Burks will host a reception on Oct. 10 at the Leslie Town Centre in Cookeville from 4:30-6:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to attend.

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A FAREWELL TO BURKS



Gloria and Dr. Bob Bell, left, speak to state Senator Charlotte Burks during her retirement reception held Thursday night. Ty Kernea | Herald-Citizen

COOKEVILLE — This time next year, state Senator Charlotte Burks will begin to say goodbye to the state legislature, a place she has gotten to know quite well over the years — even before she was elected senator.



(Pictured: State Senator Charlotte Burks tells the crowd how blessed she is to have served the area as state Senator at a retirement reception on Thursday. Ty Kernea | Herald-Citizen).

Hundreds of people — from local officials to constituents and a few state officials — all attended a retirement reception held in her honor Thursday night at the Leslie Town Centre, a sight that overwhelmed Burks.

“This is so humbling to see everyone,” she said. “I’m so very blessed to have served you all.”

A woman of endurance is the term former state representative and friend of the family Henry Fincher described her as.

“She’s gentle, but tough,” Fincher said during the festivities held Thursday night. “She was born in Jackson County on a farm. She endured that lifestyle. Years later, she met the love of her life, Tommy. They began a family. Then Tommy was ‘bitten’ by the bug — he wanted to run for state office. She endured through campaigns and nights alone when he was in Nashville.”

Tommy served a total of 28 years in the state legislature — eight years in the house and 20 years in the Senate — before he was murdered on the outskirts of his farm by his opponent, Byron “Low Tax” Looper, during an election year.

“She not only endured through that awful time, but she stepped up and ran for his seat,” Fincher continued. “She stood up for what she believed in. She stood up for what was best for her constituents.”

Serving the people has enriched her life, she said.

“I always voted with my conscience,” she said. “I always felt if I could go home and could sleep well, I did the right thing.”

Among her successes while in office include her work on the meth bills.

“They still need some tweaking,” she noted. “They’re not perfect. But hopefully I’ve planted the seed because this is a problem that is really hurting our area.”

During her time, she served as the 1st vice chair in the Senate Ethics Committee, 2nd vice chair in the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee, is a member of the Senate Education Committee and the Senate Energy, Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

She is the recipient of the Legislator of the Year awards from both the Upper Cumberland

Development District and the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency, the 2008 recipient of the Nashville Coalition Against Domestic Violence Award, the 2007 Legislator of the Year, Tennessee Association for Marriage and Family Therapists, was named the 2007 Legislator of the Year by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and many more.

She also served on the domestic violence state coordinating council, was appointed to served on the 21st Century community learning centers board for Putnam County and the creating homes initiative task force, served as the vice chair for the Upper Cumberland region for the Tennessee Tourism Caucus Leadership committee for the Tennessee Tourism Roundtable and was the 2002-2003 chair of the Tennessee Victims of Crime State Coordinating Council.

By the time her term is up, she'll have served 16 years in the state Senate.

Now, it's time to step back and relax.

"The road to Nashville is a long road," she said. "It's just time to sit back and enjoy life."

What will she be doing in retirement?

"I love to work on my farm," she said. "I also want to spend time with my kids, grandkids and great-grandkids."

Burks will be in the seat until November 2014 when the winner of the election is sworn in, whoever that may be.

One person Charlotte said will not be running is her daughter, Kim Blaylock, who is currently the Putnam County executive.

"She loves what she does right now and that's where she's good at," she said.

Charlotte will, however, still be available for constituents to talk to.

"This has really been a blessing," she said.

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*Read more about the history of Putnam Co., TN at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>