

JOANN YESSLER ORR

Joann Yessler Orr was born on February 10, 1923, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to Joseph and Gail Gauby Yessler. She passed away on January 3, 2017, at the age of 93. She is survived by two nieces and a nephew.

Orr graduated from McKinley High School in Cedar Rapids in 1941. She was active in musicals, was a member of the National Honor Society, and was president of her senior class. She frequently sang at area churches and was active at St. Paul's Methodist Church.

Orr attended Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Oberlin, Ohio, and graduated in 1946. She then moved to New York City and worked for United Features Syndicate. She sang with the Robert Shaw Chorale, a professional choir. She met, and on November 26, 1947 on Long Island, married her husband Carl. They lived in Chicago and Cedar Rapids, where Joann taught music in the schools.

The Orrs moved to Grinnell in 1952 where they bought Lang's Dairy and together they ran the business for 14 years. They also operated farms in Poweshiek County. In 1968 Orr was nominated to fill a vacancy in the Iowa Senate and won in a special election. She served one term and then was elected again in 1972 and served until 1980. She headed the Education committee for four years. She sponsored bills on mandatory immunization, solar energy, school breakfast, and supported the Iowa Equal Rights Amendment in 1977. Her most prominent bill took the tax off food and prescription drugs.

During her years in Grinnell, Orr enjoyed being a member of choirs, singing solos, and holding yearly recitals. She was involved in many civic activities and was a passionate advocate for low-income people, women, and taxpayers. After 1980 the Orrs spent winters in Cape Coral, Florida, and she continued to be active in music and social service efforts. She enjoyed gardening, reading, and taking walks with her dog.

Joann Yessler Orr was a Poweshiek County Democrat. She served in the Iowa Senate from 1969–1970 and 1973–1980, during the 63rd, 65th, 66th, 67th, and 68th General Assemblies.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE EIGHTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF IOWA: That in the passing of the Honorable Joann Yessler Orr, the State has lost an honored citizen and faithful and useful public servant, and that the Senate by this resolution expresses its appreciation of her service to the State and tenders its sympathy and kindest regards to the members of her family.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That a copy of this resolution be spread upon the Journal of the Senate and that the Secretary of the Senate be instructed to forward an enrolled copy to the family of the deceased.

Chaz Allen
Tim L. Kapucian
Kevin Kinney
Committee