



## Thomas "Tom" A. Coburn

March 14, 1948 - March 28, 2020

Thomas Allen Coburn (1948-2020)

Our beloved husband, father and grandfather lost his valiant battle with cancer on March 28, 2020. Although he fought cancer for many years, he did not allow it to define him. He worked tirelessly for the country that he loved so dearly.

Tom was born on March 14, 1948 in Casper, Wyoming to O.W. Coburn and Anita Joy Allen Coburn. He was blessed with two brothers, David and Jim, and a sister, Mary Coburn Carriere. The family moved to Muskogee, Oklahoma in 1950, where Tom spent a childhood that he remembered with great fondness. He considered the friendships that he made during that time to be a great blessing of his life; these friendships continued to bring him joy and laughter until his death. He and Carolyn were members of First Baptist Church Muskogee, where they grew up together, were baptized, and later married.

After graduating from Central High School, he attended Oklahoma State University where he received a degree in Accounting and forged many lasting friendships as a member of Sigma Nu Fraternity. In 1968, he married his high school sweetheart, Carolyn Denton and they celebrated their fifty-first wedding anniversary last December. They had three daughters, Callie Coburn Bonds,

Katie Coburn Boatright, and Sarah Coburn Rothermel.

After graduating from OSU, Tom and Carolyn moved to Virginia to work for the family business, Coburn Optical. When the company was sold, he changed course and attended medical school at the University of Oklahoma. Upon graduation, he returned to Muskogee, where he happily joined the practice of Dr. Virgil Matthews and Dr. Virgil Gray—two doctors that he greatly admired. He cherished the wisdom that he gained from both of these wonderful mentors.

Practicing medicine was his joy; he considered delivering babies one of the greatest privileges of his life. (Carolyn would like to add that many a family vacation was planned around the due date of a beloved patient.) He had great admiration and gratitude for the many doctors and nurses that he worked with on a daily basis.

In 1994, Tom felt called to run for Congress. He served three terms in the House of Representatives and ten years in the U.S. Senate. He had great admiration and appreciation for his wonderful staff; he believed they were the best on the Hill. During his years in Washington, he developed friendships with many people from both sides of the aisle. He grew to realize that relationships were far more important than political philosophy.

The relationship that was most important to Tom, however, was that with his Savior, Jesus Christ. His steadfast faith was an inspiration to his family and will be an enduring legacy for his children and nine beloved grandchildren.

In 2015, Tom and Carolyn moved to Tulsa, where they enjoyed being near their children and grandchildren and where he was able to slow down and play a little golf with new friends. Tom and Carolyn joined South Tulsa Baptist Church and greatly enjoyed the fellowship. Not one to ever truly slow down,

Tom continued to work for Convention of States, a cause in which he passionately believed.

Tom was very grateful for a life that was full of blessings. He was an inspiration to so many and will be greatly missed. His children will always be grateful for his examples of leadership, hard work, and quiet generosity.

A memorial service will be announced at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Crossover Scholarship Fund for the Crossover Preparatory Academy at [crossoverscholarshipfund.org](http://crossoverscholarshipfund.org). Tom was also very passionate about his work for Convention of States; donations can be made at [conventionofstates.com](http://conventionofstates.com).

# Tribute Wall



“ Thomas "Tom" A. Coburn

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October 23, 2023 at 09:38 AM

“As was true of many, the friendship that Tom offered to me was one of the great gifts of my lifetime.

*I knew that the end of Tom's time on earth was near when, in February, he stopped responding to the emails we had been exchanging during the past year. While I readied myself for the loss of Tom, I didn't fear for him. "Getting ready to punch my ticket," he had written a few months ago. "Can't wait to meet Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and King David. Already know the Messiah."*

*How to count the ways I owe so much to Tom? Our conversations about religion dealt with our different faiths, and while I know that Tom's care for me led him to hope that I would share his faith, his generosity made it possible for him to respect my commitment to the faith of my fathers. Once, at a meeting, I mentioned that Tom was so caring a friend that wished for me the eternal life and joy that Christianity brought. "No," he said, "I only want for you to be a better Jew."*

*I am, thanks to Tom, and in greatly strengthened ways.*

*There was more that he offered -- to me and, as I regularly saw, to others. My conversations with Tom about loyalty and life greatly strengthened my ability to offer friendship and to appreciate, offer and, hardest of all, accept the gift of love. Going through a difficult time in my marriage, Tom's advice played an essential role in preserving and strengthening it; the life and love that my wife and I now share is another gift of Tom's friendship.*

*I was also able to see how deeply Tom was respected by his colleagues. Many wished they could be as honorable as he was, but needing to be elected above all else and for other reasons, they knew they couldn't and thus honored their better selves by admiring him. But Tom -- who broke all Washington, D.C. low ego to high ability ratio records -- made it possible for the people he dealt with to add friendship with him to their admiration of him. This happened*

*because of Tom's belief that his strengths were not his but gifts of his faith, and this allowed him to caringly deal with those who disappointed him. Tom of course chafed at people who let him and themselves down, but the miracle of his faith allowed him not to think of himself as a better man than anyone to whom he offered himself.*

*Through Tom I saw the glory of Christian witness and its value to all -- perhaps to non-believers most of all -- by seeing how, in the best of men, and even in many found wanting, it can elevate personal humility and servanthood when faith is made central to life. Tom taught me how the power of faith produced the strengths I have seen in such friends as Chuck Colson, my Korea missionary friend Tim Peters and my martyred, assassinated friend Shabazz Bhatti, Pakistan's former Minister of Minority Affairs -- and, to give my faith its due credit, the strengths I saw in Joe Lieberman and my grandparents.*

*It's wrong to end this letter on a down note of mourning, and therefor best to cite General Patton who called it "foolish and wrong" to do so when thinking of men like Tom. "Rather," as Patton said, and as I do with all that is within me, "we should thank God that such men lived."*

*I hope the Coburn family remains well and is comforted Tom's lasting gifts.*

*Michael Horowitz  
703-841-1389  
207-348-2337*

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**Michael Horowitz** - July 25, 2020 at 09:09 AM



“ *RitaLynn Hunter Shamblin lit a candle in memory of Thomas "Tom" A. Coburn*



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**RitaLynn Hunter Shamblin** - May 13, 2020 at 10:49 PM



“ *Melissa lit a candle in memory of Thomas "Tom" A. Coburn*



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**Melissa** - April 02, 2020 at 08:26 AM

RS

“*Dr. Coburn is the most courageous leader Oklahoma has ever produced and my hero. I will miss my friend, Tom Coburn. Working with Tom on passing an Article V resolution in Oklahoma is one of my fondest political memories. And the time I spent with Tom writing our book “Smashing the DC Monopoly” were times I will never forget. My time on this project with my friends Larry Floyd and Tom was filled with some of the best political stories ever by Dr Coburn.*

*Being a part of the first ever mock Article V convention In Williamsburg in 2016 with my friends Tom Coburn and Josh Brecheen was an amazing time, the best of which was listening to Tom inspire a building full of politicians, many of whom were not ready for the power and conviction I saw every single time from Tom Coburn.*

*I also won't ever forget that when Tom was very ill, but knew Oklahoma was very much a toss up for passage of Convention of States, came to our state Capitol regardless to help ensure its passage, which he did.*

*Typical exchange with Dr. Coburn:*

*Request: Dr. Coburn, could you possibly come to the Capitol to help with this issue? Maybe you could say a few words and autograph some books. If there is a particular day and time let me know, or if you can't come because of your hectic schedule I understand.*

*Coburn Answer: yes*

*God be with all his family in this very difficult time. My families' prayers are with you. I miss him greatly as I know many others do.*

*Sincerely,  
Rob Standridge*

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**Rob Standridge** - March 31, 2020 at 04:25 PM