

Career Notes and Time Line: Charles McCurdy Mathias Jr.
Ryan Polk, Research Archivist, [Archives of Maryland Online](#)

“The Conscience of the Senate”

For his entire political career, Mathias was outsider. He was a republican in a state dominated by the Democratic Party, but considered too liberal for the republicans in Congress. This position enabled him to serve Maryland in a unique capacity from 1960 until the present. He is widely regarded as a model politician: principled, compassionate, loyal to his constituents, and possessed with considerable ability to recognize long-term issues.

Over the course of his career from Maryland Delegate from Frederick County in 1959 to his continued advocacy for the environment long after his retirement, Sen. McC. Mathias has dedicated his life to making Maryland and the world a better place to live.

The following brief topical list outlines important issues and events in Sen. McC. Mathias’ public career.

Civil Rights

1959- As a Delegate to the Maryland House of Delegates, Mathias voted to adopt the 14th Amendment (which the nation officially ratified in 1868).

Pushed for the Civil Rights Act, 1965
<http://anna.lib.usm.edu/~spcol/crda/adams/vga023.html>

1973- Mathias strongly supported bussing minority students to force integration.

Lobbied for a national holiday to memorialize Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (established 1983).

Environment and Conservation

Mathias supported the creation of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Nation Historic Park in 1971. He also proposed bills protecting the Assateague and Chincoteague islands, and the Antietam National Battlefield.

Sen. McC. Mathias was an early supporter of the Clean Air Act of 1972.

[After his 5-day tour of the Chesapeake in 1973] Sen. McC Mathias remarked:
"One final item I must share with you is my impression of the bay as a uniquely beautiful and vital asset to Maryland and the lives of all who live on it. Out on the water, enjoying the breeze and the freshness, it is hard to believe that such a resource could be in danger, and one day may be lost to us."

- From “Bay: New era, same concerns,” *the Capital* June 17, 2003

- Sen. McC. Mathias is credited with beginning the *Save the Bay* movement.

Please see the following articles for a career spanning account of Sen. McC. Mathias' environmental efforts:

- Peter Ruehl, "Mathias returns from 5-Day tour: "Action needed on Bay," *The Evening Capital*, June 27, 1973, pg. 19.
- "Bay Problems Occupy Mathias Alter 5-Day Trip," *The Washington Post Times Herald*, Jun. 27, 1973, Metro sec. C2.
- Hal Willard, "Pulling Together an Ecosystem," *The Washington Post*, Nov. 6, 1974, Panorama Potomac Region sec. D12
- Dr. William C. Baker, "Leadership—key to saving Bay 30 years ago—is more vital today," *The Bay Journal*, June 2003.
- Anita Huslin, "Bay's Visionary: Ex-Senator's Dream of Restoration 30 Years Ago Still Unrealized," *The Washington Post*, June 15, 2003, Metro sec. C1.
- Anita Huslin, "Environmental Activists Issue New Call to Save Bay; Event Feting Mathias Includes Push for New Oversight Plan," *The Washington Post*, June 17, 2003, Metro sec. B1.
- Mike Unger, "Bay: New era, same concerns," *The Capital*, June 17, 2003, A1.
- "Our say: Mathias right about need for bay preservation efforts," *The Capital*, June 19, 2003, Editorial sec. A8.
- Charles McC. Mathias, "Turning the Tide on the Chesapeake," *The Washington Post*, July 6, 2003, Editorial sec. B8.

Ft. Dietrich – Jobs in Maryland

1969 - Convinced President Nixon to retain Fort Detrick and its specialized research facilities as a cancer research center.

Human Rights

1969 - Lobbied for an end to nerve gas testing.

Richard Nixon Administration

Mathias often found himself in direct opposition with the Republican Nixon administration. Mathias criticized the Nixon Administration attempts to divide the country by courting the radical right and southern conservatives instead of trying to form a pluralist, more inclusive coalition party. As a result, Nixon unsuccessfully tried to purge Mathias and other "obstructionists" from Congress.

In the years leading up to the 1972 presidential election, Nixon Republicans targeted Mathias for his willingness to break with party ranks. Mathias opposed Nixon's nominations of G. Harold Carswell and Clement Haynesworth to the Supreme Court.

In 1973, Sen. McC. Mathias called for full disclosure of all Watergate related information. He was one of the first to call for impeachment of the president.

1973- Called for campaign finance reforms to limit the influence of money in determining candidates.

Vietnam

During the Vietnam War, Mathias opposed President Lyndon Johnson's policy of escalation, and during the Nixon administration, he called for a deadline for withdrawal. Mathias sponsored the bill that repealed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

- On November 8, 1979, Senator Mathias introduced legislation to authorize a site of national parkland for the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial.

Republican Party Outsider

Mathias' willingness to break party ranks, frustrated the Republican leadership especially as the party followed Ronald Reagan towards a more conservative platform.

- 1981 – He was the only Senate Republican to vote against the Reagan tax cut.