

# Taylor ad is no joke

## Former speaker touts connections in Annapolis

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ANNAPOLIS — The newspaper ad shows the former speaker of the House, a Democrat, and the current governor, a Republican, smiling side by side with the State House looming in the background. The message is clear: I may have lost the election, but I have not lost my connections.

The ad, which appeared Monday in the Cumberland Times-News, announces the launching of Cas Taylor Consulting LLC, a "government relations, policy development and strategic planning" firm. It touts Taylor's "experience, knowledge and expertise" in navigating the minutiae of state government.

"Drawing upon my experience and knowledge, I can help you avoid tomorrow's problems by identifying them today — I can direct you to those who can impact your business so that government does not become an obstacle to your business success," the ad reads.

Members of Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr.'s administration howled this week when they were shown the ad.

"I think you've been fooled," said Kenneth H. Masters, Ehrlich's legislative liaison, as he left the State House on Wednesday. "I would be shocked if the speaker would do something like that."

"Happy April Fool's," laughed Steven L. Kreseski, Ehrlich's chief of staff. "There is no way that's real."

But the ad is real and Taylor, who lost his House seat in November, is serious about his new venture.

The longest-serving House speaker in Maryland history is

now working as an unpaid adviser to Ehrlich on the now-derailed slots bill. Taylor told *The Gazette* he is proud of his relationship with the governor.

Taylor said he got approval from the administration to use the photo, and he decided to use it as a way to illustrate his connections in Annapolis.

"Why would anyone care about me advertising my business?" Taylor asked.

Shown the ad, Paul E. Schurick, Ehrlich's communications director, gave a sheepish smile and confirmed that he signed off on Taylor using the photo.

"He asked us if he could use the photo prior to the inauguration," Schurick said. "The irony is not lost on anyone in this town."

Some lobbyists and lawmakers wondered if Taylor is circumventing the state's ethics laws, which prevent a member of the General Assembly from lobbying the legislature for one year after leaving office. As speaker, Taylor presided over the approval of such laws.

But Taylor is quick to point out that the word "lobby" is not used in the ad.

"Do you see the word 'lobbying' anywhere?" he asked. "I'm lobbying for the City of Cumberland, which I am legally allowed to do."

Under state law, former lawmakers may represent municipal, county or executive branches.

Ehrlich's popularity in Western Maryland and the fact that Taylor supported Ehrlich's opponent, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, led to the longtime speaker's 71-vote defeat at the hands of Del. LeRoy E. Myers Jr. (R-Dist. 1C), a political novice from Clear Spring.

When he was shown the ad this week, Myers said at first that he would prefer not to comment. But pressed, he said, "Can you believe anything that he has done?"

House Speaker Michael E. Busch (D-Dist. 30) of Annapolis said he knows why the former speaker ran the ad. "I think he is trying to get Republican clients."