

# Casper R. Taylor Jr.: dealmaker, Assembly peacekeeper

DAILY RECORD 8-25-02

**A**s speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates from 1994 to 2002, Casper R. Taylor Jr. was probably best known for keeping an eye on the health of the entire state, especially economically depressed areas such as those in Western Maryland, Baltimore City and the Eastern Shore.

He also gained a reputation as a dealmaker — largely because of his efforts to practice the virtue of inclusion and to have those with disparate viewpoints understand the benefit of cooperation.

But before politics, Taylor, who studied government at Indiana's University of Notre Dame and who is a classical pianist in love with the work of Frederic Chopin, returned home after college to help his father run the family's restaurant and catering business. While always involved in community affairs, it was a 1974 redistricting that created a single-member district with a slight Democratic majority in a historically Republican region that found Taylor running for a seat in the House of Delegates.

He won, and an impressive, 28-year political career ensued — one Taylor hopes will continue.

Ask him to look back and point to his proudest achievements, and Taylor will respond it was his efforts to get various parties to set down their hatchets and break bread together.

"The historic rivalry, if not animosity, between Greater Baltimore and Montgomery County has been and remains a very detrimental situation," says Taylor. "I've worked very hard to get people to think in terms of a 'One Maryland' concept.

"There is so much a diversity of needs and opportunities in this state that we have to get past the parochialism," he says.

Taylor also is proud of the 2002 passage of the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act that grew out of a

Maryland ACLU lawsuit on behalf of underserved urban school children. The act has increased educational funding by \$1.3 billion during a five-year period.

"We were singled out in editorials in the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal and the Los Angeles Times, which applauded Maryland for being

the first state to meet the constitutional requirement of an equitable and adequate public education," he says. "We knew what we were doing ... contrary to the rhetoric I'm hearing today."

The first two years of funding were to be raised through a cigarette tax, and, says Taylor, everyone knew that a decision would have to be made for the remaining three years of funding. "We still had the foresight to put that into law, and my hope is that we, as a state, live up to this commitment."

Taylor further points to the personal income tax cut — the only one of its kind in recent memory in any state in the country — and the work he has done with respect to reforming the health care system.

Although no longer speaker of the house, he's not writing off a future in politics. Taylor is now a government relations consultant with the law firm Alexander & Cleaver.

"I'll continue to be involved with the House of Delegates ... I very much love and respect the institution of the state legislature and want to continue to help shape public policy into the future."

By Mary E. Medland



“

*I've worked very hard to get people to think in terms of a 'One Maryland' concept.*

Casper R. Taylor Jr.

”