

# Catching up with Lott and Taylor

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 Sun Herald

Snow, O'Mara, Stevens & Cannada. He has an office at the firm's Jackson location, just around the cor-

Though they are no longer representing Mississippi on Capitol Hill and fighting partisan battles, former U.S. Sen. Trent Lott and former U.S. Rep. Gene Taylor have more than enough to keep them busy these days.

Lott, a Republican, was elected to the U.S. House in 1972 and to the Senate in 1988. In 2002, Lott stepped down from his Senate GOP leadership position after now-notorious remarks he made at Sen. Strom Thurmond's 100th birthday party that seemed to say he supported segregation. After he had worked his way back up to minority whip, the second-highest post in the GOP Senate, Lott decided to retire in late 2007.

Taylor, who was a former Bay St. Louis city councilman, won a special election in 1989 for the U.S. House seat Lott had held. Taylor, a Democrat, was chosen by voters after then-U.S. Rep. Larkin Smith, who had held Lott's old seat for only seven months, died in a plane crash. In 2010, Taylor was beaten by Republican challenger Steven Palazzo, who now represents South Mississippi in Washington.

The Sun Herald caught up with Lott and Taylor recently to find out what they're up to these days.

## Lott lobbies, travels

Since leaving the Senate, Lott, 71, has been working as a lobbyist. He formed a partnership with former Louisiana Democratic U.S. Sen. John Breaux and their firm later became part of Patton Boggs.

Lott has a long list of clients, and he represents the law firm Butler,

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 ner from former Gov. Haley Barbour's office. The office there gives him a place to land when he's not in Washington. In June, Lott and Barbour were on hand in London for the opening of a Butler Snow office there. "If retirement means stop working, that doesn't apply to me," Lott said.

He's also making public appearances. Lott and Breaux gave a talk in Colorado recently on why getting things done in Washington is so difficult. When asked for the upshot of it, he said it comes down to a few things.

Today, congress members and senators don't socialize much with the opposite party, so there isn't much bonding across the aisle, but the major problem is an overall lack of leadership.

"The leadership in the Senate doesn't get along," Lott said. "(Former Democrat Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle) and I were always friends, but Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid don't really like each other. House Majority Leader John Boehner and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi barely speak (to each other).

"President Obama makes a good speech, but he doesn't follow up. He doesn't provide leadership. He doesn't get his hands under the hood of the car and do the dirty work."

Lott recalls fondly his time in the Senate, which ended on a high note. A few years after the remarks at Thurmond's birthday, Hurricane Katrina came, and Lott was back in the spotlight.

He lost his Pascagoula home to the storm and was suing his insurance company. At the same time he was working alongside U.S. Sen. Thad Cochran to secure billions in federal funding for South Mississippi's recovery.

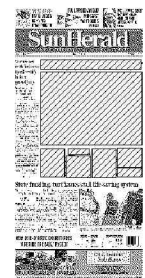
But in the midst of that, his brother-in-law, high-powered Mississippi attorney Dickie Scruggs, was indicted after federal officials alleged he conspired to bribe a judge with \$50,000 in exchange for a favorable ruling in a dispute over \$26.5 million in attorney fees. Scruggs was sentenced to five years in federal prison, three years of supervised release and given a \$250,000 fine.

Today, Lott and his wife, Tricia, spend part of their time living in Washington and part of it living at a place they bought outside Jackson after Katrina wiped away their Pascagoula home. He also spends time in a community called WaterColor, which is between Destin, Fla., and Panama City, Fla.

Lott doesn't want to get back into politics.

"I'm staying busy, and trying to do some things to help Mississippi along the way," Lott said. "I'll always love my time representing the Gulf Coast."

## Taylor builds back in Bay



Taylor lives in the Bay St. Louis home he rebuilt after Katrina.

He serves on the Hancock County Port and Harbor Commission and works on his boat, a 43-foot converted shrimper that can still pull a trawl. He goes to Washington at least quarterly because he is on a national board that has oversight for the National Guard and Reserves at the Pentagon and because he is on call as a consultant for defense firms. His primary employer, Navistar Defense, is a manufacturer of fire-resistant vehicles designed to deflect the impact of mines and IEDs, a project he championed while in office.

The consultant job hasn't required many trips to Washington, "because the product speaks for itself," he said. "A bomb goes off underneath and the soldiers inside walk away. It's proven its value."

Taylor said he has more time for family.

"Margaret still seems happy that I'm home," he said of his wife.

He's enjoying "guilt-free" time with his three grandsons, two living close enough he can see them almost every weekend.

Recently, he gathered volunteers and put rebuilt Hancock County's Dunbar Avenue Pier, damaged in 2012 by Hurricane Isaac. It was a community service project he said came about because it is near his house and he walked past it regularly. Seeing the gate across it and the missing boards, he thought "this is just labor."

He started with county crews and was joined by a troupe of volunteers — men in their 70s wielding power tools and women carrying boards.

"We had a steady stream of Vietnam veterans and concerned citizens that would come out for a week," he said. The county supplied the wood and other materials. It was finished July 3.

He discovered a tool that takes the difficulty out of pier building when he went with a group to New Jersey to answer their officials' questions about hurricane recovery in the wake of Hurricane Sandy.

"It was such a labor saver. I'd never seen it before. You don't have to bend down. Don't have to drill a pilot hole. The screws are in clips of about 20, which means you're not reloading the gun very often," he said. Equipped with such a tool, his pier project went more smoothly.

He saved the county up to \$45,000 in labor.

Does he consider getting back into politics?

"Sometimes I do," he said. "Like when I see this mess with the National Flood Insurance (Program) — Congress holding a gun to people's heads and the best they're offering is a year extension."

It's frustrating, he said, the inflated premiums, "which will adversely effect so many people down here and knowing that I know there's a better solution."



See video at  
[SunHerald.com](http://SunHerald.com)



CAROLYN KASTER/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Former Sen. Trent Lott speaks in Washington in 2012. Since leaving the Senate, Lott, 71, formed a partnership with former Louisiana Sen. John Breaux and their lobbying firm became part of Patton Boggs.



TIM ISBELL/SUN HERALD

Gene Taylor pilots his crabbing boat at the Bay-Waveland Yacht Club. Taylor, a former U.S. representative, lives in the Bay St. Louis home he rebuilt after Hurricane Katrina and goes to Washington at least quarterly. He is on call as a consultant for defense firms.



TIM ISBELL/SUN HERALD

Finn Emmett watches as his grandfather, Gene Taylor, empties a crab trap.