



Senator William Thad Cochran

December 7, 1937 - May 30, 2019

OXFORD, MS: The Honorable William Thad Cochran, longtime U.S. Senator from Mississippi, died on Thursday, May 30, 2019, after a period of declining health. He was 81 years old.

When Cochran stepped down from the U.S. Senate last year due to health concerns, he was celebrated by Senate colleagues, constituents, and friends as one of the last exemplars of reserve and acumen in the Congress, earning the title “the Quiet Persuader” from Time magazine in their 2006 story on Cochran as one of the Ten Best Senators. His willingness to work across the aisle and commitment to making headway rather than headlines consistently characterized his forty-five years of Congressional service.

Thad Cochran was born in Pontotoc, MS, on December 7, 1937. His father, high school principal and later Hinds County School Superintendent William Holmes Cochran, and mother, math teacher Emma Grace Cochran, modeled for him lives dedicated to public service. Growing up mostly in the small town of Byram, MS, Cochran was an Eagle Scout, member of the 4-H, and high school valedictorian and student-athlete. While earning his undergraduate degree in psychology at the University of Mississippi, he was president of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity, vice president of the student body, company commander in the Navy ROTC, and head cheerleader. He served on the USS MACON prior to entering law school at the University of Mississippi, where he

was selected for membership in Phi Delta Phi, the editorial board of the Mississippi Law Journal, and chairman of the Honor Council. He studied international law for one year at Trinity College Dublin, on a Rotary Foundation Graduate Fellowship.

Cochran's early career was spent in the capital city of Jackson, MS. After graduating Ole Miss law school in 1964, he married Rose Clayton of New Albany, MS, and joined the firm of Watkins & Eager, making partner in under three years. During that time, he served as chairman of the Mississippi Law Institute, lawyer's chairman for the Heart Fund and United Givers Fund, president of the Young Lawyers Division of the Mississippi Bar Association, board member of the Jackson Rotary Club, and chairman of the Legal Services program of the Jackson Junior Bar. Cochran became involved in local and statewide campaigns for various candidates and ultimately served as executive director of Mississippi Citizens for Nixon-Agnew in 1968. Four years later, Cochran was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, representing the Fourth District of the state. In both of his subsequent re-elections, he received over 70 percent of the vote.

In 1978, Cochran successfully ran for the U.S. Senate, becoming the first Republican in over 100 years to win statewide election in Mississippi. As in the House of Representatives, his interests in the Senate reflected issues crucial to Mississippi: education, agriculture, economic development, and defense. His authorship of legislation helped to support initiatives in teacher training, adult literacy, wilderness protection, shipbuilding, military bases, and farm programs, as did his distinguished service as chairman of the Appropriations Committee. His support of Mississippi following the devastation of Hurricanes Rita and Katrina was particularly impressive.

Cochran is often referred to as a statesman, exhibiting the virtues of patience, integrity, and compassion while at the same time employing both his wealth of

accumulated knowledge and his native rationality to lead his decisions. A devoted father, husband, music lover, tennis player, and friend, he leaves a legacy of public service that it was his genuine pleasure to perform.

Cochran is survived by his wife, the former Kay Bowen Webber; one brother, Nielsen Harris Cochran of Jackson, MS; two children, Thaddeus Clayton Cochran of New Albany, MS, and Katherine Holmes Cochran of Hattiesburg, MS, and three grandchildren.

A visitation will be held Sunday, June 2, 2019, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at The University of Mississippi Robert C. Khayat Law Center (481 Chucky Mullins Dr., Oxford, MS 38655). A funeral service will be held Monday, June 3, 2019, at 11:00 a.m., with a visitation immediately following until 6:00 p.m., at the Mississippi State Capitol (400 High St., Jackson, MS 39201). Another funeral service will be held Tuesday, June 4, 2019, at 11:00 a.m. at Northminster Baptist Church (3955 Ridgewood Rd., Jackson, MS 39211). Coleman Funeral Home of Oxford is in charge of arrangements.

In lieu of customary remembrances, the family requests with gratitude that memorial contributions in Senator Cochran's name be directed to the donor's choice of the Thad Cochran Law Scholarship at The University of Mississippi (406 University Ave., Oxford, MS 38655), The Nourishing Place (P.O. Box 7785, Gulfport, MS 39506), or Northminster Baptist Church (3955 Ridgewood Rd., Jackson, MS 39211).

Online condolences may be left on the Tribute Wall at www.colemanfuneralhome.com.

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN 2. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

The University of Mississippi Robert C. Khayat Law Center
481 Chucky Mullins Dr.
Oxford, MS 38655

Funeral Service

JUN 3. 11:00 AM (CT)

Mississippi State Capitol
400 High St.
Jackson, MS 39201

Funeral Service

JUN 4. 11:00 AM (CT)

Northminster Baptist Church
3955 Ridgewood Rd.
Jackson, MS 39211

Tribute Wall

JM

“ Dear Thad and Kate,
I'm sure you don't remember me, but I remember the two of you well along with your wonderful parents and grandparents. I used to babysit you two at Mr. Hugh and Ms. Kathryn Rose's house in N.A. I thought the world of your grandparents and your parents! I just happened to read of your father's passing in an email from Ole Miss. Know that I am remembering you both in my prayers as you mourn the loss of your father. I share your grief, but I also rejoice with your Dad as he rests in the everlasting arms of Jesus and reunites with your Mom and all the rest of his family.
I've often said that your Dad was the only honest politician I ever knew, and I was proud to know him!
Much love,
Jane C. Massey

Jane C. Massey - June 10, 2019 at 05:32 PM

HL

“ We share your joy in his life as we grew up in Byram, walked the halls of Byram High School and benefited from his work in the community, State, universities, and nation. We share your sorrow in his death. Di Ann B. And Harvey S. Lewis, St. Petersburg, Florida



Harvey and Di Ann Lewis - June 05, 2019 at 07:10 PM



“ In 1979 when Willie Morris came to “scout” Oxford before deciding to move here, we invited Thad to the tailgate party in the Grove. The night before, he and Willie had signed the wall at Taylor Grocery, the first to do so. Thad helped us convince Willie to move back to Mississippi. He was a great senator and a wonderful friend. - Larry Wells

Larry Wells - June 02, 2019 at 05:10 PM

TH

Yes he was Mr. Wells

Terry Harpole - June 04, 2019 at 11:56 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Senator William Thad Cochran.



June 02, 2019 at 04:55 PM

DB

“ I shared many good times with the Senator and his wife Kay. Kay is a long time friend. They were always loving and fun to be with. My heart, thoughts and prayers are with Kay, family, friends and colleagues.

Deborah Bowker - June 02, 2019 at 04:48 PM



“ *Sweet Tenderness was purchased for the family of Senator William Thad Cochran.*



June 02, 2019 at 01:39 AM



“ *I had the distinct pleasure of sitting in law class with Thad. We were all on the honor system, one that Thad took strictly to heart and abided by to the letter, carrying that honor on out through his life of law practice and public service. It was wonderful to have this great man share his straight up character and personality with others. Know you are all in our prayers. Be sure that you carry the torch!--
Bob Gilfoy-Salttillo,MS*

Bob Gilfoy - June 01, 2019 at 09:50 PM

JC

“ Thad and I were awarded Rotary fellowships and were guests of the Dublin Rotary Club in 1963-64. He was studying International Law at Trinity; I was studying Medieval/Renaissance literature at University College, home of James Joyce, of course. We met weekly at the hotel for lunch with the Rotary Club and were obliged to give a talk about our home states to the Dublin Club, and to other Rotary Clubs throughout the country. His comments about the civil rights situation in Mississippi were remarkably honest. His manner and presence remain fresh in my mind after all these years. He was a lovely, kind, gentle man with a wide grin and a hopeful heart. He was going to be married after he returned home. The Dublin Club gave him a set of crystal glassware as a wedding present. I still wonder if he got home without breaking it. I just watched a video of Thad's farewell to the Senate. I see that the hopeful heart was there to the end. I am thankful for that year in Dublin with Thad: he made me proud to be an American. I hope his family will find comfort--and joy-- in their memories.

*Judith Petterson Clark, PHD; Professor and Chair Emerita,
English/Creative Writing/Women's Studies; Stephens College,
Columbia, Missouri (but I was a Kansan in 1963-64)*

Judith Clark - June 01, 2019 at 09:43 PM

VE

“ I'm so sorry to hear of Thad's death. I first met him in 1956 when I tried out for freshman cheerleader and credit him with me being chosen. When he ran for Senate I was proud to be his Monroe County campaign chairman. My son Van III worked for him in the summer of 1982. He was a great man.

Van East - June 01, 2019 at 04:25 PM

TH

“ We were very sorry to hear about the Senator's death, and will keep all family in prayer

Terry Harpole - June 01, 2019 at 04:17 PM

DS

“ Sad to hear about the passing of Senator Thad Cochran . Sen. Cockran was always a friend to the farmers of Mississippi and helped them in anyway he could. As one of the leaders of the farm movement in the late 70's and early 80's I was able to meet with him a time or two and always felt he was doing all he could to support our Mississippi farmers. The farmers I represented always supported Senator Cockran and helped keep him in Washington where we knew we had a friend. My condolences to all his family. He was a good man.

Deryl Saylor - May 31, 2019 at 07:55 PM

WC

“ I worked for Thad as a legislative assistant in 1982-1983, after graduating from UM law school. He was indeed a gentleman and the gentle persuader. My favorite memory: I was with Thad in the Capitol building. The elevator door opened and there stood Senator Ted Kennedy and Senator John Glenn!! We stepped in the elevator and Thad introduced me to them. Glenn was a Republican conservative and Kennedy, as we all remember, was a liberal Democrat. They both spoke to Thad in a tone of respect. (I was more impressed with meeting Sen. Glenn because he was one of the first astronauts!) He worked quietly with both sides to reach a compromise on many issues.

William B. (Benny) Carter - May 31, 2019 at 07:36 PM

DS

“ Sorry to hear about Thad's passing. He was the best MS had. My daughter graduated with his son from FHS. Prayers for his family and friends.



DOROTHY SCOTT - May 31, 2019 at 06:04 PM

JA

“ Jo Acker sent a virtual gift in memory of Senator William Thad Cochran



Jo Acker - May 31, 2019 at 04:27 PM

GN

“ Gary And Jauwina Nichols lit a candle in memory of Senator William Thad Cochran



Gary and Jauwina Nichols - May 31, 2019 at 09:31 AM

GN

Senator Cochran will surely be missed in the State of Ms, no one ever fought harder for us than he did. RIP sir

Gary and Jauwina Nichols - May 31, 2019 at 09:34 AM

MS

“ *Mr. & Mrs. Johnny Johnson, Sr. lit a candle in memory of Senator William Thad Cochran*



Mr. & Mrs. Johnny Johnson, Sr. - May 31, 2019 at 08:46 AM



“ *Senator Cochran was a good man. He will be missed. I appreciate all the work he done for our great state. God please be with the family now and in the upcoming months.*

Christy Payne - May 31, 2019 at 07:02 AM

NS

“ *I would like to say Mississippi could not have picked a better U S Senator to represent it's great Magnolia State. He was one the most dedicated human beings that graced the halls and senate floor. When you ask something of him he would do it not because he had to but just because you knew he would deliver. He extinguished gentleman and always listen and if were in his power he would see you got what was ask from. He took pictures of the Vietnam 🇻🇳 War Memorial not just once but twice. God's greatest to represent Mississippi no better nor finer. God's blessing and May you soar to the Heavenly Father's waiting arms never to tarry where your new body awaits. God bless you Senator Cochran I thank you for your service and time Mississippi. You have made us all so proud of all you've done. May God bless the Cochran family. Mississippi has no regrets. Sweet Journey Home*

Norma Stroupe - May 31, 2019 at 04:27 AM

JJ

“ Thank you for your service to Mississippi and the nation.

Jimmy Johnston - May 30, 2019 at 11:49 PM

MM

It was a pleasure to be of service to senator Cochran and will forever cherish that time in my heart ❤️

Molly M. Jackson RN, MSN - June 03, 2019 at 07:13 PM