

Wilbert J. “Billy” Tauzin



From the small rural Cajun community of Chackbay, Louisiana, Billy Tauzin began his long 34-year career in elective office with a resounding first primary victory, winning his first four-year term in the Louisiana State House of Representatives. There he was recognized as one of “Louisiana’s Ten Best Legislators”, quickly rising to the position of Chief House (Majority) Leader and Chairman of the important Natural Resources Committee, with jurisdiction over both Energy and Environment.

In 1980, Congressman Tauzin sought and won election to the U.S. Congress seat being vacated by newly elected Governor David Treen, and there began a 25 year career representing Louisiana’s 3rd Congressional District, comprising the Cajun Parishes located between New Orleans, Lafayette and Baton Rouge. There he held Chairmanships of the U.S. Coast Guard Committee (where he conducted the hearings on the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, and authored the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 legislation); the Panama Canal Committee (where he helped manage the mandated transfer of the canal to the people of Panama); the Telecommunications Committee (where he authored the law providing for Satellite Television Competition, co-authored the historic broadcast deregulation and the laws managing the transition from analog to digital television and cellular telephone and internet broadband service provisions); and eventually the Chairmanship of the powerful, the oldest and most jurisdictionally diverse Committee of Congress, the Energy and Commerce Committee. There, Chairman Tauzin conducted the historic Enron hearings and others like it, the Ford Firestone hearings, which produced the first comprehensive reform of highway safety laws since the 1930’s, and floor managed the passage of the historic Medical Part D reform to Medicare, providing seniors with coverage for their vital medications.

Congressman Tauzin left his mark on natural gas, airline, trucking, and electricity deregulation, on the nation’s Clean Air Act, on Superfund, the historic Telecommunications Reform Act of 1996, on biomedical research, marine and natural resource acts, pipeline safety, finance and consumer protection laws. He was called, “knowledgeable and eloquent” by the Almanac of American Politics, and, “One of the House’s savviest members” by the National Journal magazine. Later, as PhRMA’s President and CEO, the Washingtonian magazine named him as one of the ten most powerful people in Washington, D.C.

Congressman Tauzin holds some extraordinary distinctions: the first and only U.S. Congressman in American history to hold leadership positions in both major political parties, serving fifteen years as a Conservative Democrat (without ever being challenged for re-election by a Republican), and then ten years as a Republican (never once challenged by a Democrat); the only member to ever change parties and receive no opposition from either party in that re-election campaign; the author of the only two major pieces of legislation to become law over a Presidential veto in over four decades (the Satellite Viewers Rights provisions—vetoed by President George H.W. Bush and the Security Litigation Reform Act—vetoed by President Clinton), and the longest serving Congressman for Louisiana’s 3rd Congressional District in U.S. history.

In 2004, as he was being heavily courted to retire and assume the position of President of the Motion Picture Association to replace Jack Valenti, Congressman Tauzin was diagnosed with a rare form of intestinal cancer. Forced to leave Congress and his Chairmanship behind, he began a yearlong battle for his life. Given less than a 1% chance of survival, the Congressman not only overcame those great odds, but in January 2005 assumed the Presidency of PhRMA, the trade association representing the drug



discoverers who had just saved his life. Over the next 5 ½ years, Congressman Tauzin helped shepherd the industry through the turbulent years of health care reform and left the important legacy of a new Patients' Assistance Program, now providing over six million needy Americans with free medicines they could not otherwise afford, and a new program to help close the so-called "hole in the doughnut" of Medicare coverage.

Upon retirement from PhRMA in 2010, Congressman Tauzin and his son Thomas formed the new government relations firm of Tauzin Consultants, and personally affiliated with the national firm of Alston + Bird as "Special Legislative Counsel".

Some other interesting facts about Congressman Tauzin:

- 01.** Starred on stage as Shakespeare's Hamlet, as Applegate (the devil) in Damn Yankees, and numerous other amateur productions.
- 02.** Worked in home heating and air conditioning and in electrical wiring.
- 03.** Learned construction with his father and re-roofed, air conditioned and built an upstairs bedroom in his father's house, which was converted from his grandfather's dance hall.
- 04.** Worked as a field hand, and later as a pipe-fitter helping in a shipyard.
- 05.** Earned a B.A. from Nicholls State University, where he served as student body President, and won a state literary award with a prize-winning short story and published poetry.
- 06.** Like King George VI of England, suffered from a severe speech impediment that was corrected by a gifted speech therapist.
- 07.** Earned his J.D. from L.S.U. law school along with U.S. Senator John Breaux. Congressman Tauzin is Godfather to Breaux's son Bill as Senator Breaux is Godfather to Congressman Tauzin's son, Bill.
- 08.** Chartered a Louisiana State Savings and Loan Association and Chaired its first Board.
- 09.** Co-founded the famous Congressional Democratic Blue Dogs and served as one of its first Co-Chairs.
- 10.** Co-authored a Cajun cookbook, entitled Cook + Tell, and cooked on Martha Stewart's television show (and later led the Congressional investigation of her stock involvement in ImClone).
- 11.** Gave a young James Carville his first political election victory in the Congressman's first campaign in 1980, where James served as a young intern.
- 12.** Conducted in 1997 and 1998 a 40-city national debate tour with Congressman Dick Armey, entitled the Armey-Tauzin Scrap the Code Tour, arguing for a National Sales Tax to replace the U.S. Income tax.
- 13.** With four other colleagues, dumped the U.S. Income Tax Code off the deck of the tea ship, "Beaver II" into Boston Harbor on April 15, 1997.
- 14.** In 1998, authored a book entitled, The National Sales Tax, calling for the repeal of the U.S. Income Tax Code and calling upon U.S. citizens to begin forming "Tea Parties" across America to wrest power away from Washington, D.C. and return freedom and liberty to the people of our country.

Congressman Tauzin also now serves on the Boards of Directors of Entergy Corporation and on LHC Group, a multi-state provider of home health and hospice care, where he is Lead Independent Director.

Over the years Congressman Tauzin has been honored by such diverse groups as the Chamber of Commerce, Farm Bureau, National Federation of Independent Business, B'nai B'rith, Concord Coalition, Business Software Alliance, National Association of Manufacturers, Christian Coalition, Boy Scouts of America, National Association of Broadcasters, the 3rd Congressional District Black Caucus, and many more.

