

THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

PRESS RELEASE

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U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS MOURNS THE DEATH OF CIVIL RIGHTS ATTORNEY WILLIAM L. TAYLOR

Washington, DC – The United States Commission on Civil Rights mourns the loss of William L. Taylor, a highly successful desegregation lawyer who litigated cases for the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund following the Supreme Court’s landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, for which he wrote one of the briefs for the unusual summer Court session called to consider the case. As the general counsel and later staff director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Mr. Taylor directed investigations and research that played an important role during the passage of Civil Rights Act and other civil rights legislation of the 1960s. During his tenure, the Commission held hearings around the country which contributed recommendations that formed the core of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. He was also the founder and chairman of the Citizens’ Commission on Civil Rights and vice chairman of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

In his autobiography, *The Passion of My Times: An Advocate’s Fifty-Year Journey in the Civil Rights Movement*, Taylor proudly quoted from one of his heroes, Oliver Wendell Holmes: “As life is action and passion, it is required of a man that he should share the passion and action of his time, at the peril of being not to have lived.” Taylor showed that passion throughout more than a half-century of leadership that included successful efforts to pass civil rights legislation throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988, the Civil Rights Act of 1991, and the 1993 National Voter Registration Act. In later years and most recently, he worked on education reform legislation to advance opportunities for poor and minority children. He received the DC Bar’s first Thurgood Marshall Award in 1993 and taught law at Georgetown University Law School.

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with monitoring federal civil rights enforcement. Members include Chairman Gerald A. Reynolds, Vice Chair Abigail Thernstrom, Commissioners Todd Gaziano, Gail Heriot, Peter N. Kirsanow, Arlan D. Melendez, Ashley L. Taylor, Jr., and Michael Yaki. Martin Dannenfels is the Staff Director. Commission meetings are open to the general public. The Commission’s website is <http://www.usccr.gov>.