

# Sledge Taylor

**S**LEDGE TAYLOR, 1974 AGRICULTURAL engineering, technology, and business graduate, was elected as the National Cotton Council chairman for 2015.

“The chairman is the top industry leadership position. There are seven industry segments: producers, cotton ginners, the cottonseed industry, warehousing, marketing cooperatives, merchants, and textile manufacturers. Although I am also a producer, my involvement in the NCC developed through the cotton ginning segment,” Taylor explained.

Taylor serves in the position for one year. The National Cotton Council represents the industry before lawmakers in Washington.

“We work on funding for priority programs of the cotton industry through the appropriation process. Our goal is to make sure our priorities are funded,” he said.

This year, Taylor worked on Farm Bill implementation and education, including addressing technical details of the Stacked Income Protection Plan (STAX) program.

“We are hoping to split irrigated and non-irrigated cotton acreage in STAX next year,” he said.

He also provided testimony for the House Agricultural Committee, Conservation and Forestry Subcommittee on the Environmental Protection Agency’s *The Waters of the United States* ruling.

When he is not in the nation’s capital, he attends meetings around the country, visiting leaders from various cotton industry segments. One such meeting was the Annual Conference of the International Textile Manufacturers Federation, held in the U.S., in San Francisco, for the first time in nearly 20 years.

“The NCC has a dedicated and professional staff, including a president who is the chief staff officer, to carry out our priorities, but it also takes active participation by members in the cotton industry,” he said. “I like to travel as much as I can to different industry segments to listen to any concerns. I also feel that I need to communicate what the NCC is doing and keep people



*Taylor meets with congressional members during a trip to Washington, DC.*

updated on our issues and achievements.”

He says this role has helped illustrate how important it is to educate the general public about cotton.

“It amazes me the number of people, who do not understand agriculture. As each generation gets farther from the fields where families may have once lived and farmed, it is increasingly critical to try to educate the public on what we do as farmers and as the cotton industry,” Taylor said. “There are a lot of misconceptions out there. It’s vital to communicate the good things we do, both as producers and within different segments of the industry.

“The NCC works on a broad range of issues within the cotton industry and agriculture,” he continued. “It has been a busy year and I am proud of the staff and all that we have accomplished and the proactive attitude between staff and industry leadership.”

Taylor is also president of the Como Consolidated Gin Co., Inc. in north Mississippi and owns Buckeye Farms, in Como, Mississippi, where he grows cotton, corn, soybeans, wheat, peanuts and raises cattle.

“I have been around a cotton gin for as long as I remember. We run an efficient, upgraded gin that fills a need in the community,” he said. “As a producer, we are very committed to cotton. We have 1,800 acres dedicated to cotton in northwest Mississippi. One farm is west of Como in the eastern edge of the Delta; we also farm east of Como in the Hill Region.”

Taylor explained how his degree at MSU helped him develop as an agricultural leader.

“It was a broad degree that gave me a solid background in a range of fields like accounting, animal science, soils, business law, economics, and biology. You see it at work on my farm—we have a very diverse operation.”

Taylor encourages current MSU students to select a career path they enjoy.

“I’ve gone through tough times in farming, but I enjoy it. Pick something that you love to do,” Taylor recommended. “Don’t get discouraged. It takes a long time to get enough experience to figure things out. I have been farming for 42 years and the older I get, the more I realize how much I have to learn.”

Taylor and his wife have three sons and two grandsons.

“I have a lot of good help,” Taylor said of his many endeavors and multiple hats. “I have a son on the farm, a gin manager, and great employees. The fact that I have such good people helping me, allows me to do all of the things I do.

“The NCC position has been a great learning experience. It is amazing how much I continue to learn about the cotton industry, within this country and internationally. There are a lot of really great people in the cotton industry and their economic impact on local communities is significant. A financially sound rural America is one of my primary goals and I enjoy working through the NCC to bring that about,” he concluded.