

*South Carolina Political Collections*  
*University of South Carolina*

**Robert M. “Robin” Tallon, Jr.**  
*(b. 1946)*

**Papers, c. 1981-1992**

<b>Volume:</b>	29 linear feet
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## **Biographical Note:**

Robert M. "Robin" Tallon, Jr. represented South Carolina's Sixth District in the United States House of Representatives for five terms, 1983 to 1993. Prior to that, he founded, owned, and operated a successful men's wear store in Florence, and represented District Sixty-two, Florence County, in the South Carolina House of Representatives, 1981 to 1982.

Tallon was born in Hemingway, S.C. in 1946 to Mary Williamson Tallon and Robert M. Tallon, Sr. He was reared in Dillon County and attended the University of South Carolina during the 1964-65 academic year. At eighteen years of age, he opened a clothing store, Robin's, in Florence, S.C. He eventually expanded the business to a chain of eight stores spread across the state.

President Jimmy Carter appointed Tallon to the White House Conference on Small Business in 1979, and Tallon has cited this as a seminal experience which led him to run for the South Carolina House in 1980. Elected with 67% of the vote, he served on the Labor, Commerce, and Industry Committee.

In 1982, he ran for Congress and defeated Hicks Harwell in a bitter Democratic primary with 71% of the vote. For the general election in November, he worked with African-American church leaders to assure high African-American turnout and support, built an extensive "Get out the Vote" apparatus, and defeated incumbent Congressman John Napier.

*Robin Tallon (center) served on the Agriculture Committee*

In Congress, Tallon served on the Agriculture Committee and Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, Textile Caucus, Travel and Tourism Caucus, and Rural Health Care Coalition. He became chair of the Travel and Tourism Caucus in 1990 and the Agriculture Subcommittee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations, and Nutrition in 1991. Important legislation with which he is associated includes the Food, Agriculture Conservation, and Trade Act

of 1990, bills related to rural development and aquaculture, and the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights. He also participated in negotiations over the GATT international trade agreement.



Following the 1990 census, the Sixth District was redrawn to form a black-majority district. Although it was predicted that Tallon would be reelected, he surprised friends and political analysts by announcing he would not seek reelection because he did not wish to heighten racial tensions by running against a black opponent. "This contest couldn't have done anything but further divide the races, cause racial disharmony and unrest. I don't want any part of it. It goes against everything I've worked for . . . I could win, but I think in the long term, winning could be losing." Columnist

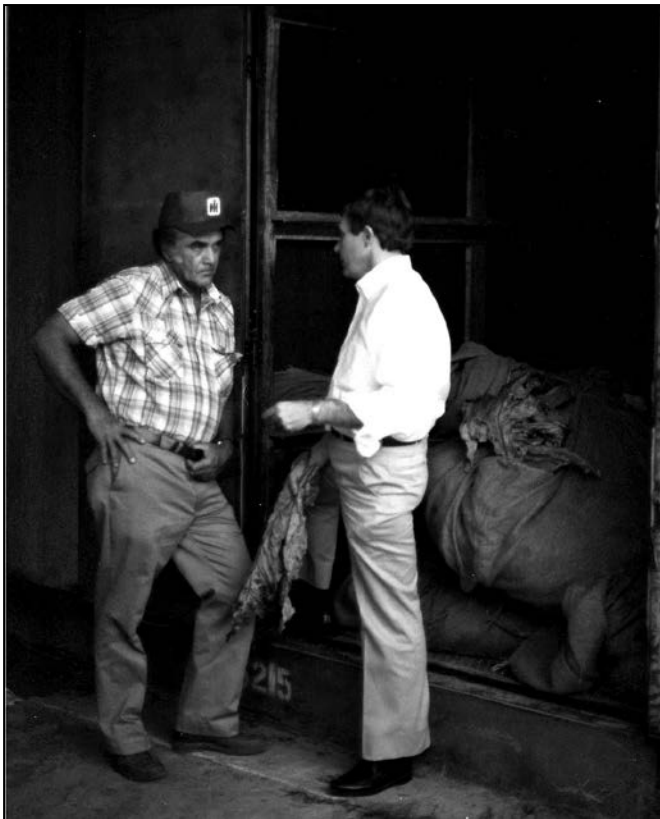
Armstrong Williams noted, "Seldom in politics do we see an incumbent politician give up a chance to be re-elected for the sake of principle." James Clyburn succeeded Tallon as the Sixth District's representative.

Since leaving Congress, Tallon has worked as a consultant in Washington. Among his most prominent clients is the Washington-based U.S. Tobacco Institute. He has also involved himself in real estate development in the Dillon area and is frequently mentioned as a possible candidate for other political office.

### **Scope and Content Note:**

The collection chiefly consists of Tallon's Congressional Papers, 1983 to 1992. It is arranged in the following series: Public Papers, Personal Papers, Speeches, Audio-Visual Records, and Clippings. Public Papers consists of two sub-series, South Carolina House of Representatives and U.S. House of Representatives. The South Carolina House of Representatives consists of a single folder concerning his 1981 to 1982 term. The U.S. House of Representatives sub-series, 1983 to 1992, is divided into General Papers, Constituent Texts, Grants and Projects, Office Records, Press Releases, Schedules, and Voting Record.

**General Papers** are arranged topically for each year. Topical files chiefly relate to bills and issues before Congress and may include copies of the bills and resolutions, committee prints, and related official and constituent correspondence.



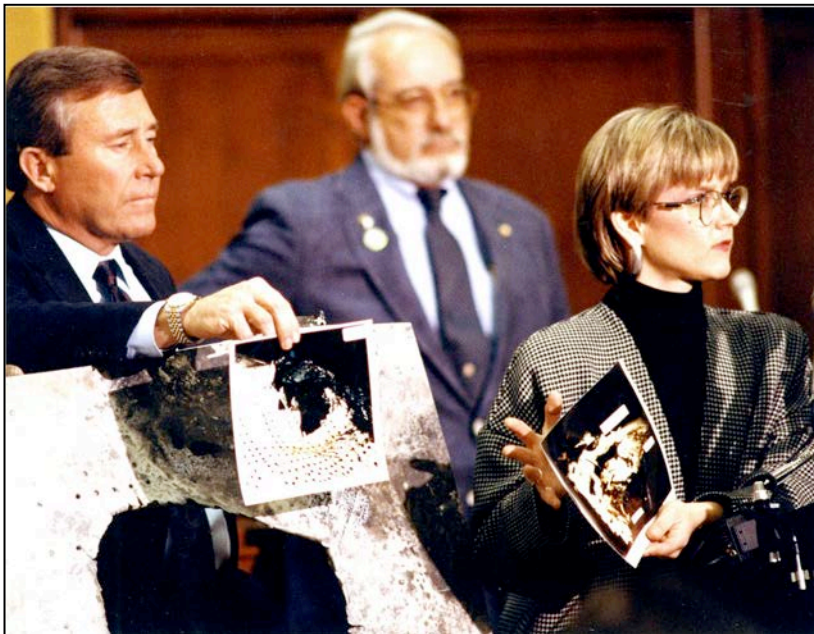
*Tallon talks tobacco with a farmer*

Tallon served on the Agriculture Committee and Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee throughout his tenure in Congress. Agriculture files demonstrate Tallon's concern for farmers in his predominantly rural district, the center of the state's tobacco industry. Tobacco files specifically related to agriculture are filed under Agriculture, including materials dealing with tobacco exports. Other tobacco information is filed under Taxation and Health, depending on the aspect of legislation being considered. For example, correspondence dealing with excise taxes on cigarettes is found under Taxes, while materials concerning the health effects of smoking are under Health. Tallon also worked on rural development legislation to improve the economic prospects of depressed rural areas of South Carolina. He devoted considerable effort to it in the wake of the droughts and hurricanes affecting his district during the 1980s. Tallon's efforts in working

with the federal government to aid those devastated by Hurricane Hugo are documented in 1989's Hurricane Hugo files.

In 1991, Tallon became chairman of the Agriculture Subcommittee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations, and Nutrition, a body with jurisdiction over fruit and vegetable marketing regulations as well as nutritional matters, including food labeling, food stamps, and aspects of the federal welfare program administered by the Department of Agriculture. As Subcommittee Chairman, Tallon held hearings on issues including food labeling and welfare simplification. These materials are filed under Agriculture, Hearings, along with other hearings held by the full Agriculture Committee. Other information on food stamps, WIC, school lunches, and nutrition is filed under Agriculture, Nutrition.

Merchant Marine and Fisheries files include information on the U.S. Merchant Marine, fisheries, and boat user fees. As a member of this committee, Tallon sought to improve the port facilities of his district, particularly those of Georgetown, S.C., to enhance the area's ability to attract major industries.



*At a press conference, Tallon and a colleague display evidence from the crash of a DC-8 near Gander, Newfoundland.*

Armed Services files relate to the Army Corps of Engineers, National Guard, and closing of Myrtle Beach Air Force Base. Of particular interest are the Gander Investigation files which contain extensive information relating to the December 12, 1985 crash of an Arrow Air DC-8 flight near Gander, Newfoundland, Canada, which killed 248 members of the U.S. Army's 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division

and eight American crew members. It was Canada's worst air disaster. Tallon's effort to reopen this investigation is perhaps one the most interesting aspects of his Congressional career. U.S. and Canadian investigation teams determined that icing on the aircraft's wings resulted in the crash. A minority report of the Canadian Aviation Safety Board maintained that an explosion caused the disaster. Constituents related to one of the victims urged Tallon to investigate the crash. Tallon met and corresponded with the Department of Defense, the National Transportation and Safety Board, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Federal Aviation Administration, President George Bush, and the State Department but was never satisfied with the investigation of the crash.

In October 1989, Tallon wrote to President Bush a letter, signed by 103 Congressmen, requesting that the investigation of the Gander crash be reopened by the U.S. Government; Bush never agreed to reopen the case. Tallon's efforts led to hearings by the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime. The subcommittee concluded that the Canadian and American investigations had not fully considered the possibility that the crash had resulted from a terrorist

bomb. On March 18, 1992, Tallon held a press conference during which he released evidence that an explosion caused the plane to crash. He conducted the press conference just prior to the March 20, 1992, episode of the Arts & Entertainment Network's "Investigative Reports" series which examined the Gander crash. A copy of this tape is in the Audio-Visual Series. Other Gander materials are located in the Clippings, Press Releases, and Audio-Visual series.

Budget files consist of material concerning the federal budget as a whole. Papers concerning funding for specific issues are filed with the other material regarding that issue. For example, the budget materials for the armed services, National Guard, health, and education are under those topics rather than budget.

Banking files document the Savings and Loan collapse and the House of Representatives' bank scandal in which many members of Congress were proven to have bounced checks. Commerce includes steel and petroleum sales, voluntary restraint agreements, trade deficit, insurance, and foreign and domestic trade issues. Communications includes topics such as television cable rates, beer and wine advertising, pornography, and antitrust restrictions on the Bell system. Environment contains issues such as toxic waste disposal, clean air, acid rain, recycling, underground petroleum storage tanks, and wildlife preservation. Of interest in the Foreign Affairs files is information regarding apartheid and the Iran-Contra affair.

Health files regard issues such as AIDS, drug and alcohol abuse, effects of smoking, rural hospital development, and extensive Medicare/Medicaid files. Important Medicare/Medicaid issues include the mandatory assignment of patients to doctors, complaints by South Carolina physicians and hospitals about the state's peer review organization, Medicare Solvency and Health Care Financing Reform Act of 1984, and proposed Community and Family Living Amendments which provided a gradual shifting of federal funds from state institutions for the disabled to community-based integrated settings.



Labor files regard the minimum wage, railroad retirement, federal employee issues, labor unions, unemployment insurance, family and medical leave legislation, and OSHA regulations. Material on the Economic Growth and Jobs Creation Act of 1991 (H.R. 960) and economic growth legislation for 1992 are located in Taxes because they aimed to reduce social security and capital gains taxes in order to stimulate the economy. Taxes also includes tax cuts; alcohol,

cigarette, and gas taxes; the 1992 Reforestation Tax Act, and low-income housing tax credits.

Tourism files reflect the activities of the Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus and Tallon's



interest in promoting tourism in his district, especially in the Grand Strand. Travel files consist of itineraries, correspondence, and notes from trips Tallon made as a member of Congress.

**Constituent Texts**, 1983 to 1991, contain copies of the form letters used to respond with computer generated letters to constituent correspondence regarding issues and legislation before Congress. The texts are grouped in two-year periods reflecting the sessions of Congress. A list at the front of the first folder for each Congress notes the issue being addressed, such as “Pro Medicare,” and “School Lunch Budget Cuts -- Reagan,” the date the text was prepared, and the code assigned to the text. The series General Papers also contains numerous copies of Tallon responses generated using these texts, attached to constituents’ letters.

**Grants and Projects** files consist of correspondence and applications concerning specific federal grants administered in South Carolina. They are arranged topically under headings such as education, health, historic preservation, housing, and water and sewer.

**Office Records** consists chiefly of schedules, accepted invitations, and notices of committee meetings and hearings. These are arranged chronologically.

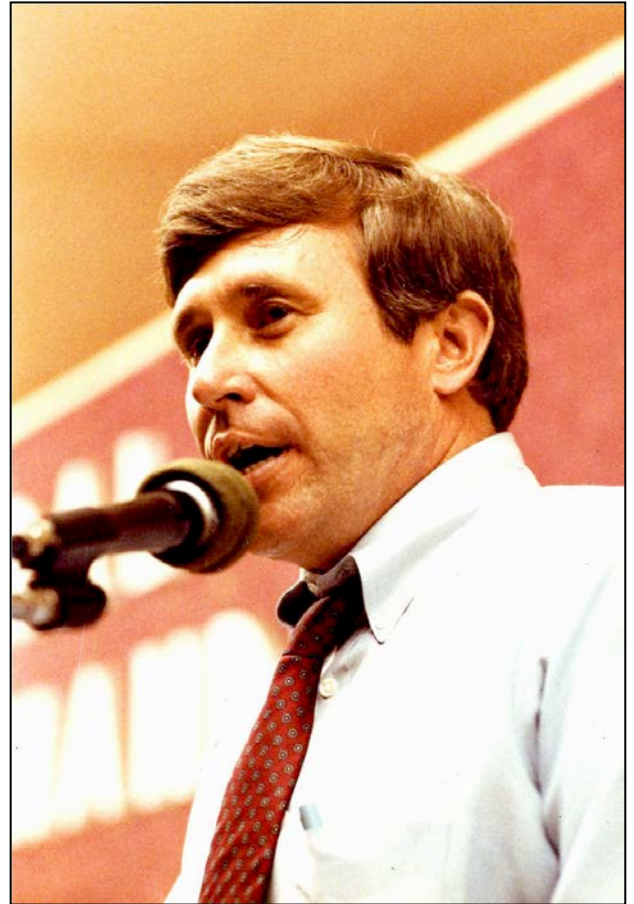
**Press Releases** consists of Tallon’s “News and Views” column, newsletters, radio transcripts, and press releases and is arranged chronologically. It includes press releases from the Tallon office and releases by others concerning Tallon. The radio transcripts, “Washington Report,” are not interviews but brief prepared statements taped and provided by Tallon for radio stations in his district. The original audio tapes are not present.

**Voting Records** contains Tallon’s official voting record as well as assessments of his voting record produced by private interest groups.

**Speeches** are arranged chronologically and consist of final texts, drafts, and research materials. Campaign speeches include speeches made by Tallon on behalf of other candidates. Speeches concerning the Democratic Party’s national campaigns are filed under Democratic Party. Other topics include agriculture, commerce, education, and tourism.

**Personal Papers** consist of General and Campaign files. General files include Christmas cards Tallon received from other members of Congress in 1991. Campaign files, 1982 to 1992, chiefly consist of correspondence and memoranda concerning fund raising and campaign issues. Also included are lists of contributors and public opinion polls.

**Audio-Visual** records consist of photographs, audio cassettes, and video cassettes. Included are a video tape of the March 20, 1992, episode of the Arts and Entertainment Network’s “Investigative



Reports” examining the Gander crash as well as tapes of several productions of Tallon’s “Washington Report,” featuring Tallon speaking with another member of Congress about issues before Congress.

**Clippings** consists of articles clipped by Tallon’s staff relating to his activities and issues of importance to him and the Sixth District. The articles are chiefly taken from the *Florence Morning News*, Columbia’s *The State*, the *Charleston News and Courier*, and the *Greenville News*. Clippings are arranged by year and include general and topical files, reflecting their original order in the Tallon office. Little is present for the period 1986 to 1987. The topical heading Communications includes articles regarding anti-pornography legislation. Education includes material on student school bus drivers. Forestry includes material on the spotted owl in Washington and Oregon. Health includes material on the effects of smoking. Labor includes material on the minimum wage, railroad retirement, federal employees, unemployment insurance, family and medical leave, and OSHA.



Merchant Marine and Fisheries includes articles on boat user fees. The 1991 Taxation file includes reports on H.R. 960, the Economic Growth and Jobs Creation Act and low-income housing tax credits.

Telecommunications includes material on beer, liquor and tobacco advertising. Transportation includes outdoor billboard advertising, the Food Contamination Act, seat belt and helmet laws, and the Airline Defense Passengers Act of 1990.

## **Robert M. “Robin” Tallon Timeline**

- 1946 August 8, born in Hemingway S.C., to Robert M. Tallon, Sr. and Mary Williamson
- 1964 graduate, Dillon High School  
attended University of South Carolina, 1964 to 1965
- 1979 delegate to White House Conference on Small Business, 1979 to 1980
- 1980 elected to S.C. House, Florence County, District 62
- 1981 S.C. House, 62nd District, 1981 to 1982  
chair, Freshman Legislative Caucus  
member, Labor Commerce and Industry Committee, Real Estate Subcommittee
- 1982 June, Tallon led four-man Democratic primary for the 6th Congressional District, then defeated runner-up Hicks Harwell in a runoff, receiving 71% of the vote.  
November 2, elected to U.S. House to represent S.C.’s 6th District over incumbent John L. Napier (R)
- 1983 served in U.S. Congress, 1983 to 1993
- 1984 defeated Mary Demetrious in Democratic primary with 74% of vote  
defeated Lois Eargle (R) in general election with 60% of vote
- 1986 defeated Robert Cunningham (R) in general election with 76.1% of the vote
- 1988 defeated Robert Cunningham (R) in general election with 75.5% of vote
- 1989 pushed for funding and interstate highway designation for Myrtle Beach Connector  
began investigation of 1985 Gander Mountain crash
- 1990 elected chair of Congressional Tourism Caucus
- 1991 elected chair of Agriculture Subcommittee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations, and Nutrition
- 1992 withdrew from re-election bid

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**Sources:** *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774 - 1989*; *Legislative Manual of South Carolina*, 1981, 1982; 1989 - 1990 *Congressional Directory*, 101st Congress; 1985 - 1986 *Congressional Directory*, 99th Congress; *The State* newspaper; Tallon press release, ca. 1990.



## Series List:

### Public Papers:

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<i>US House of Representatives:</i>	
<i>General</i>	<i>Boxes 1-19</i>
<i>Constituent Texts</i>	<i>Box 19</i>
<i>Grants and Projects</i>	<i>Boxes 19-20</i>
<i>Office Records</i>	<i>Boxes 20-23</i>
<i>Press Releases</i>	<i>Box 23</i>
<i>Voting Record</i>	<i>Box 24</i>

### Personal Papers:

<i>General</i>	<i>Box 24</i>
<i>Campaign</i>	<i>Boxes 24-25</i>
<i>Speeches</i>	<i>Boxes 25-26</i>
<i>Audio-Visual:</i>	
<i>Photographs</i>	<i>Box 26</i>
<i>Audio Cassettes</i>	<i>Box 26</i>
<i>Video Cassettes</i>	<i>Boxes 27-28</i>
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"Review of Nutrition and Health: What Scientists and Consumers Know," 19 Nov.:

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"Review of the Effect of Operation Desert Storm on Individuals Served by Programs  
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"Review of the U.S. General Accounting Office Report on Mismanagement of the  
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     Armed Services:  
         General  
         Gander Investigation (2)  
         Myrtle Beach Air Force Base (2)  
         National Guard (3)  
     Budget  
     Commerce [See also: Foreign Affairs]  
     Democratic Study Group Legislative Report (4)  
     Education

Environment  
Farewell Letters  
Foreign Affairs [See also: Commerce]  
Health:  
    General (3)  
    Medicare / Medicaid  
Labor  
Merchant Marine and Fisheries  
National Flood Insurance Program, Georgetown, S.C.  
Social Security

Taxes (2)  
Transportation (2)  
Veterans Affairs

**Box 19**

n.d.  
Constituent Texts:  
    1983 - 1984 (5)  
    1985 - 1986 (7)  
    1987 - 1988 (4)  
    1989 - 1990 (4)

Grants and Projects:  
    Agriculture  
    Commerce  
    Education:  
        General

Chesterfield - Marlboro Technical College  
Clarendon County School District 1  
Florence - Darlington Technical College  
Francis Marion College  
University of South Carolina and Georgetown County School District

**Box 20**

Health:  
    General:  
        1983 - 1988  
        1989 - 1991  
    Clarendon Medical Center  
Historic Preservation:  
    General  
    Longwood Foundation, Myrtle Beach  
    McKissick Museum  
    State Museum

Housing:  
    General  
    City of Hartsville  
    Pawley's Island

Natural Resources:  
    Contrary Swamp and Pee Dee River  
    Wetlands

Pinopolis West Dam

Transportation

Water and Sewer:  
    General  
    Honea Path  
    Long and Bucksport Project, Horry County  
    Pawleys Island  
    Pee Dee Electric Co-operative

Misc.

Office Records:  
    Office Expenses, 1983

Invitations and Schedules :

1983:

Invitations:

Jan.-Apr.

May-Jun.

Jul.

Aug.

Sep.

Oct.

Nov.-Dec.

Schedules, Appointment Book

1984:

Invitations:

Jan.-Mar.

Apr.-May

Jun.-Jul.

Sep.

Oct.-Nov.

Dec.

Schedules, Appointment Book

1985:

Invitations:

Jan.

Feb.

Mar.

Apr. (2)

May (2)

Jun.

Jul.

Aug.-Sep.

Oct.

Nov.-Dec.

Schedules, Appointment Book

1986:

Invitations:

Jan.-Feb.

Mar.

Apr.

May

Jun.

Jul.-Aug.

Sep.

Oct.

Nov.-Dec.

1987:

Invitations:

Jan.

Feb.

Mar.

Apr. (2)

May

Jun.

Jul.

Aug.

Sep.

Oct.-Nov.

Dec.

**Box 21**

**Box 22**

1988:

Invitations:

Jan.-Feb.

Mar.

Apr.

May

Jun.

Jul.-Sep.

Oct.

Schedules:

Jan.-Feb.

Mar.-Apr.

May-Jun.

Jul.-Sep.

Oct.-Dec.

1989:

Invitations:

Jan.-Feb.

Mar.

Apr.

May

Jun.

Jul.-Aug.

Sep.-Dec.

1990:

Schedules:

Jan.-Feb.

Mar.

Apr.-May

Jun.-Jul.

Aug.-Sep.

Oct.-Dec.

1991:

Invitations:

Jan.-Feb.

Mar.

Apr.

May

Jun.-Jul.

Aug.-Sep.

Oct.

Nov.-Dec.

Schedules

1992:

Invitations:

Jan.

Feb.

Mar.

Apr.

May

Jun.

Jul.-Aug.

Sep.-Nov.

Schedules

Press Releases:

“Congressional Record”:

1983-1985

1986-1987

**Box 23**



1988-1991 and n.d.  
"News and Views" Column  
Newsletters:  
1983-1985  
1986-1989  
1990-1991  
1992  
Tallon:  
General:  
1982 - Mar. 1983  
1983, Apr. - Dec.  
1984  
1985  
1986  
1987  
1988  
1989  
1990  
1991:  
Jan. - Apr.  
May - Dec.  
1992 and n.d.  
By Others  
Radio Transcripts, "Washington Report," 1985-1986

Voting Record:

**Box 24**

Clerk of the House:  
Legislative Activity Guide:  
1985 (5)  
1986 (5)  
1992 (2)  
Legislative Profile, 1985-1986 (2)  
Conservative Democratic Forum, 1990  
Democratic Study Group:  
1983 (3)  
1984 (3)  
1985 (3)  
Miscellaneous Outside Assessments, 1986, 1990

**Personal Papers:**

General  
Campaign:  
1982:  
General (2)

Financial Records  
1983:  
General  
Financial Records  
Public Opinion Research  
1984:  
General  
Financial Records:  
Contributions  
Reports  
Issues  
Publicity  
1985-1986  
1987:  
General

**Box 25**

Financial Records:  
    General  
        Fundraiser, 18 Nov.  
    Public Opinion Research  
1988:  
    General  
    Financial Records, Fundraisers:  
        27 Apr.  
        28 Sept.  
1989-1990:  
    General  
    Financial Records  
1991-1992  
n.d.

Clinton Administration Appointments, Possible  
Financial Records

**Speeches:**

1982  
1983  
1984 and c. 1984  
1985  
1986 and c. 1986  
1987  
1988 (f. 1)

1988 (f. 2)  
1989 and c. 1989  
1990 and c. 1990  
1991 and c. 1991  
1992  
n.d. (Titled)  
n.d., General (4)  
n.d., Preparations

**Box 26**

**Audio-Visual:**

Photographs:  
    General (2)  
    Negatives and proof sheets  
    Portraits  
    Slides

Audio Cassettes [each entry represents a separate cassette]:

1980:  
    Labor, Commerce, and Industry Committee Insurance Speech  
    NAACP Speech  
1981, Georgetown Campaign Interview  
  
1982:  
    Debate with John Napier  
    Interviews:  
        Napier  
        Tallon  
    Radio Commercial (side 1); News 15 Report on Tallon/Harwell Debate (side 2)  
    Speeches (2 tapes)  
1983, Announces Appointment to Congressional Tourism Caucus (side 1); Post-election Speech  
    (side 2)  
1986:  
    Campaign, Radio Commercials  
    Interview on WDAR, "This, That, and the Other," 24 Jan.  
1990, Sound Bytes  
1991, Redistricting Interviews with Theo Mitchell and Robin Tallon, 30 May

n.d., Speech on Foreign Trade

Video Cassettes:

**Box 27**

1982, Campaign:

General

Television Commercials

Primary Debate, Grand Strand, with Tallon, Hicks Harwell and Charles McGill, also interview with J. Griffin

Primary Victory Celebration

1983:

Extended interview on his past and his plans in Congress, with newsman Chris Williams  
"The New 98<sup>th</sup>"

1984, Campaign, Independent Businessman

1985:

Television Interviews:

18 Apr. and 16 May

July, Sept, and Oct.

Watch on Washington

1986:

"The Boy Who Became Congressman"

Lecture to Government Class at Coastal Carolina University, Nov.

S.C. Watch on Washington, Apr. [re: Trade, Tax Reform, National Anthem]

Television Commercial

1987:

Taxpayers' Bill of Rights News Conference and Floor Statement, Feb.

Television Call-In with Tallon, Mar., Apr., and Oct.

1988:

Campaign, Television Commercials

Nicaragua/Sandinistas, Human Rights Mission, 12 Jul.

Television Interviews, 27 Apr.

1989-1990, Television Call-In, 10 May 1989, 7 Sept. 1989, 26 Sept. 1989, 12 June 1990, 27 June 1990

1990 [cont.]:

Congressional Tourism Caucus, 19 July

Gander Investigation:

20/20 and Inside Edition Shows

Hearing Testimony on Crash, 4 Dec.

House Floor Coverage, 24 Apr.

"Washington Report," programs featuring Tallon with Rep. John Spratt, Rep. Beryl Anthony of Ark., and Rep. James Oberstar of Minn.; House Floor Debate Congressional Tourism Caucus, 26 Apr.; and statement regarding flag burning legislation, 22 June

1991:

**Box 28**

"Master," including Inside Edition follow-up on Gander investigation, House Floor proceedings, C-SPAN coverage of appearance of Tallon with Rep. Tom Delay speaking on economic growth before House Ways and Means Committee, and television interview of Tallon prior to A&E broadcast on Gander.

Watch on Washington, "In the Wake of War," 22 May

1992:

Gander Investigation, A&E Investigative Reports

WIS Television, Columbia, interview with Tallon re his service in, and the current state of, Congress

n.d.:

Railroad Task Force

S.C. Watch on Washington ("Upgrading Education")

Tallon Birthday

Watch on Washington

**Clippings:**

1979-1982, Jun.

1982, Jul.-Dec. and n.d.

1983:

- General (2)
- Agriculture:
  - General
  - Tobacco
- Armed Services
- Budget
- Campaign
- Environment
- Industry
- Pinopolis Dam
- Tourism
- 1984:
  - General
  - Agriculture
  - Budget
  - Campaign (6)
- 1985:
  - General
  - Agriculture
- Armed Services:
  - General
  - Gander Investigation
- Budget
- Transportation
- 1986:
  - General
  - Armed Services, Gander Investigation
- 1987
- 1988 (4)
- 1989:
  - General (2)
  - Armed Services, Gander Investigation
- 1990:
  - General (4)
  - Armed Services, Gander Investigation
  - Tourism
- 1991:
  - General (4)
  - Agriculture Subcommittee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations, and Nutrition
  - Reapportionment
  - Wetlands
- 1992:
  - General (3)
  - Agriculture Subcommittee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations, and Nutrition
  - Armed Services:
    - Gander Investigation
    - Myrtle Beach Air Force Base
  - Campaign
- 1993-2011

**Box 29**