

Hampshire JUDD GREGG, and the entire Senate leadership for their warm welcome and support.

On November 4, voters in my State of New Hampshire went to the polls and demanded a new direction, just as voters did across the country. I am eager to work with my fellow Senators and with our next President, Barack Obama, to fulfill that promise of change. The challenges before us are great. For 11 months in a row, the number of jobs in our Nation has declined. More and more families across the country are losing their homes to foreclosure, and too many Americans watched their retirement savings evaporate last year.

It is no exaggeration to say that this 111th Congress and President-elect Obama will face some of the most difficult challenges in our country's history. These problems were created over many years, and they will not be solved quickly. But Americans have always united to meet great challenges, and I have no doubt that we will do so once more.

Our first task is to get our economy back on track by putting middle-class families first again and creating good jobs. As the recession continues, it has become clear that a bold economic recovery package is necessary. This package must focus investment in areas of the economy that will provide the recovery we need and lay the foundation for long-term economic growth.

Investing in our Nation's infrastructure will both create needed jobs in the short term and foster economic development in the long term. There are critical capital projects throughout the State of New Hampshire and the country—projects such as repairing and upgrading our roads and bridges, modernizing our public schools and higher education facilities, and replacing outdated water treatment plants, and other municipal projects. These investments will create jobs and lay the groundwork for sustained economic growth.

We also need a bold investment in energy efficiency and clean alternative energy. These investments in new energy will create millions of 21st century green-collar jobs, begin to reverse global warming, and start on the path to energy independence.

New Hampshire small businesses already are leaders in the new energy economy, making everything from wood pellets to ethanol, from forest by-products to solar panels and biofuels. We have seen firsthand how investment in clean energy creates good jobs up and down the economic ladder—advanced manufacturing jobs, highly skilled construction jobs, jobs installing solar panels and energy-efficiency systems, jobs selling and delivering new fuels. These are good jobs. They are jobs that cannot be outsourced overseas. I am honored I will be joining the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources to work on these very issues as we develop a real energy policy for the future of this country.

These investments are necessary to get our economy moving again. But as we must invest, we also must develop a comprehensive plan to address the Nation's ballooning budget deficit and the enormous national debt we have inherited. Our Nation's financial strength tomorrow depends on our careful planning and prudent investments today.

In November, Americans cried out for a new way of doing business in Washington. I applaud President-elect Obama for leading the way with the most open and transparent transition process in our Nation's history and believe we must continue that transparency. We must recommit to accountability and oversight, and we must end the partisan gridlock that has stymied progress for too long. I am committed to working across the aisle to make Washington work again for middle-class American families.

Tuesday, when I took the oath of office as a Senator, I made a commitment to embrace the opportunities that lie ahead and to help lead our Nation in a new direction. I am eager to begin.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. REID addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, could I ask my friend from New Hampshire to withhold her request?

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I say yes to the majority leader. I did not see the majority leader on the floor. I apologize for that. I withdraw my request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The request is withdrawn.

The majority leader is recognized.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR SHAHEEN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wanted to be here to listen to JEANNE SHAHEEN give her maiden speech. Of course, it brings back a flood of memories of my maiden speech. I was so fortunate, I tell everyone, on that initial speech. I had served a couple terms in the House, and I had been trying to get something called the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights passed. The subcommittee chair in the House made fun of my legislation. I did not get anywhere with that. But I believed in it, so I marched over here—and I had the last seat way back in the corner over there—and I gave my first speech, and it was on the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights.

Fortunately, I say to the Presiding Officer, David Pryor—MARK PRYOR's father—was presiding. He was a member of the Finance Committee and the chairman of the subcommittee that had jurisdiction over the IRS. CHARLES GRASSLEY was listening to my speech. There were not many more people than there are right now on the floor. But David Pryor sent me a note saying: I like this. Let me help you. And CHUCK GRASSLEY communicated with me saying he would help.

That was a fortunate day in my life because even though I took credit for the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights passing, it would never have happened if not for David Pryor. He worked the last night of this session—I was in Nevada—he was on that Finance Committee, and they were trying to complete the conference. Anyway, he got it done.

These maiden speeches are meaningful because you will never forget the speech you have given.

Now, for JEANNE SHAHEEN, I have had such admiration for her for such a long time. We all watched as she presided over the State of New Hampshire as Governor. She did a remarkably good job. When I learned she wanted to run for the Senate, I was excited because this great statesperson, with this engaging smile and her ability to work hard, which everyone knows about, is going to leave her in good standing here in the Senate.

I say to my friend from New Hampshire, the junior Senator from New Hampshire, I appreciate the Senator running for the Senate. The people of the State of New Hampshire are going to reap benefits from that decision for many years to come.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR ROBERT BYRD

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I join Senators on both sides of the aisle in paying tribute to our dear colleague and dear friend from West Virginia on this historic occasion of his 50th anniversary in the Senate. On January 7, 1959, ROBERT C. BYRD was sworn in as a Senator for the people of his beloved West Virginia, and in the years since then, he is become truly one of the greatest Senators ever to serve in this Chamber.

I have served with BOB for 46 of those years. I have immense respect for him, and I am proud to say that we have become close friends. I love ROBERT C. BYRD.

It wasn't always this way. There was a time that Senator BYRD and I were rivals, each with eyes on the position of majority whip. I was elected to that position after the 1968 election, but as I have often said, BOB taught me how to count votes in 1970 when he defeated me for reelection. It turned out to be a blessing for both of us.

BOB would go on to become one of the finest majority leaders in the history of the Senate, and the defeat freed me to concentrate on my legislative passions of health care, education, labor, and civil rights. In a very real sense BOB liberated me, and as our leader in many of those years he was especially helpful in accomplishing my goals.

The BOB BYRD I have come to know is a patriot, a passionate defender of the Constitution and the special role of the Senate, and an eloquent historian of the Senate, who has brilliantly served the people of his State.

I have so many wonderful memories of our relationship, but there are two recent ones I want to mention here.

The first has to do with the Iraq war. When President Bush set us on this course, few had the courage and strength to question, let alone oppose, this rush to war, but BOB BYRD stood strong against it. Facing enormous pressure, he led the opposition. He was in the minority—a lonely minority—but he was unbowed. He was right, and I am sure that history will judge his courageous leadership well.

The second memory is of a campaign trip I took to West Virginia in the fall of 2004 to support our candidate JOHN KERRY. We crisscrossed the State from Charleston to Mingo County, and what I saw everywhere was the extraordinary love and affection the people of West Virginia have for BOB and that he has for them. It was an amazing and touching thing to sense the deep bond between this great man and the people he has so ably represented in Washington for so long. It is an experience I will never forget.

Now, as we reflect on his unparalleled career in the Senate on this special 50th anniversary, I congratulate our friend. I thank him for all he has done so well for so many for so long. On this golden anniversary of his arrival in the Senate, I think of the famous lines of A. E. Housman about the “golden friends” the poet had. BOB BYRD is our golden friend, and we are all deeply honored to have the privilege of serving with him.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I would like to add my congratulations to Senator ROBERT C. BYRD for his historic achievement today. Senator BYRD arrived in the Senate 50 years ago. For decades, he has defended the Constitution and the principles upon which it stands. Senator BYRD is truly a statesman, a patriot, a proud son of West Virginia, and an important voice in the history of this country.

The people of West Virginia definitely know that they have a champion who will stand up for them. Senator BYRD has never forgotten the hard life that he had as a boy growing up in poverty in the southern West Virginia coalfields. He has always remained true to his faith and his family and has worked to build a better future for West Virginia and the Nation.

In the history of our great Nation, Senator BYRD has served longer than all but one Member of Congress and has been a committed public servant. Senator BYRD first came to Washington in 1953 as a Congressman and served three terms in the House before being elected to the Senate. Senator BYRD quickly learned the rules and procedures that make the Senate run. He used these to his advantage while serving as the Senate majority leader and in other key leadership positions. On June 11, 2006, Senator BYRD became the longest serving U.S. Senator in history, and in November 2006, he was elected to an unprecedented ninth full term.

During his tenure, his colleagues have elected him to more leadership positions than any other Senator in

history. This includes Senate majority whip, chairman of the Democratic Conference, Senate minority leader, and Senate majority leader. Currently, BYRD is the President pro tempore. Throughout his career, Senator BYRD has cast more than 18,100 roll call votes in five decades of service in the Senate.

Senator BYRD is also the longest serving member of the esteemed Appropriations Committee. He has served as its chairman or ranking member since 1989. After many distinguished years of service, he has stepped down from his leadership position but will remain an important voice on this committee. I have enjoyed serving with him on the Appropriations Committee and have learned a tremendous amount under his leadership.

There are other sides to Senator BYRD that have contributed to his life's accomplishments, his achievements as a musician and author. Senator BYRD learned to play the fiddle at a young age and carried it with him everywhere he went. His skill with the instrument led to performances at the Kennedy Center and on a national television appearance on “Hee Haw.” He even recorded his own album, “Mountain Fiddler.” He is also the author of a magisterial four volume set about this body entitled “The Senate, 1789–1989” and other works.

No tribute to Senator BYRD would be complete without mentioning his life's love, Erma Ora James. For nearly 69 years, the Byrds were inseparable, traveling throughout their native West Virginia and crossing the globe together. Sadly, Mrs. Byrd passed away on March 25, 2006, but Senator BYRD speaks lovingly of her and their life together each day.

The times have changed considerably since Senator BYRD was first elected to the West Virginia House of Delegates and eventually the U.S. Senate. We have seen a man walk on the Moon. We have mapped the human genome, and we have seen unbelievable technological advances that have changed the way we live, work and communicate. But through it all, the one constant is Senator BYRD's steadfast championing of our Constitution and the people of West Virginia. I join my colleagues in offering my hardy congratulations to him on this important day.

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, today marks the 50th anniversary of Senator ROBERT BYRD's service to this most American of institutions: the United States Senate.

“Service to the Senate”—I have chosen these words intentionally, and with care. To serve in this hallowed chamber is to meld service to home and community with service to the Nation as a whole. It is a distinction that we are all privileged to share.

But through his five decades in this Chamber, ROBERT BYRD's service has transcended the ordinary to rise to the absolute allegiance our country has only rarely received over her long history.

Senator BYRD was born and raised in humble circumstances. The loss of his mother at the age of 1 left him a virtual orphan, and he grew up in West Virginia's coal country. The Great Depression postponed the young ROBERT BYRD's education, but it did nothing to hold back his lively and agile mind or his passion to seize on America's promise of equal opportunity. In 1946, he entered West Virginia's House of Delegates, and sought progressively higher offices. Finally, in 1958, he arrived in the Senate and found his “home.”

It is said that education opens doors, but in Senator BYRD's case, we learn that the doors it opens may not be the ones that we expect. For him, he was already a Member of the House of Representatives when he began work to earn his J.D. Ten years of night school finally earned him the degree as a sitting Senator.

So what doors did his studies open? After all, he was already one of the Nation's highest officials.

Education, a love of history, the discipline of rigorous study, the independence of thought. If you think about it, these are the very qualities that our American democracy most depends on. And by cultivating them, Senator BYRD grew in his capacity to serve his home, serve his Nation, and to serve the Senate.

Mr. BYRD served as the Senate majority leader from 1977 to 1981, and many believe it is in recognition of that time that I continue to call him “Mr. Leader.” But I would like to take this opportunity to set the record straight.

Mr. Leader. My dear friend. Protocol dictates that anyone who served as majority leader should retain the title for life. Even in the absence of protocol, however, my heart would demand that I rise and salute you as leader of this institution. Congratulations on this milestone, Mr. Leader. We have worked together for many years, and it will be a distinct honor to continue working with you on the Appropriations Committee and in the Senate.

WORKING FAMILY CHILD ASSISTANCE ACT

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, yesterday, I joined Senator LINCOLN to introduce legislation to make permanent the tremendous change Congress enacted last October to enhance the refundable child tax credit. To assist working families, Congress reduced the amount of earnings a family must have to qualify for the refundable child tax credit to \$8,500 for 2008 from the \$12,050 that prevailed prior to passage of the Act. Unfortunately, because Congress did not make the incentive permanent, families will have to earn at least \$12,550—\$4,050 more—this year to take advantage of the incentive.

At a time in which the economy is in recession and many have to work two or even three jobs to put food on the table, it would be unconscionable to