

1977 he was elected Democratic leader, a position he held for six consecutive terms. For these 12 years as Democratic leader, he served as both majority and minority leaders.

To me, Senator ROBERT C. BYRD will always be Mr. Chairman. As a freshman Senator, I had the opportunity to serve on the Appropriations Committee. To be elected to the Senate and to be able to serve on the Appropriations Committee and then to serve under ROBERT C. BYRD is a fulfillment of the legislative dream.

We in this Senate are very fortunate to have the wisdom and experience of this man. The people of the State of Nevada benefit every day from what the Senator from West Virginia does. It is not only the State of West Virginia that benefits from what he does but every State in the Union benefits from what the Senator from West Virginia does.

He is serving in his eighth consecutive term as a Senator, making him the only person in the history of the Republic to achieve this milestone.

His great rise from the bituminous coal fields of his hardscrabble youth is a tribute to America. It is a tribute to Senator BYRD, but it is also a tribute to America. In America, one does not have to be born into money, prestige; one does not have to have educated parents to become an educated man; one does not have to have parents who have fancy homes and houses to come to Washington and serve in the greatest legislative body in the history of the world.

I believe Senator BYRD is an American patriot, underscoring and underlined, a dedicated servant to the people of West Virginia, and a Senate legend. I believe I speak for everyone in the Senate when I say how proud I am to serve with the Babe Ruth of the Senate, ROBERT C. BYRD.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. If the Senator will withhold momentarily.

Mr. REID. I withdraw my suggestion. The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair thanks the Senator.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of routine morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The distinguished acting majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I apologize for launching into my statement prior to protocol of the Senate being followed, but I was anxious to say what I had to say about the Presiding Officer.

I apologize for getting a little ahead of the agenda.

Seeing no other Senator in the Chamber at this time, Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### SENATOR BYRD, PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I am on my way to a meeting with Senator LOTT on the reorganization of the Senate, but I passed through the Senate Chamber en route. It is always a great thrill to come to the Chamber of the Senate, and a great privilege to be a Senator. Seeing the distinguished President pro tempore, the distinguished chairman of the Appropriations Committee, presiding, I decided to exchange a few moments of pleasantries and ask how a man of his prominence and importance could be presiding over the empty Senate.

Senator BYRD exchanged philosophical comments and referred to the people here as "auditors" of the Government of the United States. I hope that is not inappropriate, in terms of referring to people in the gallery. I know we cannot acknowledge people. I breached the rule once when Penn State won the national championship and acknowledged the presence of the Penn State football team in the gallery. Senator BYRD, in a very gentle, kindly way reminded me of the Senate rule.

However, I think we are being audited, and the Senate of the United States has important oversight responsibilities on the Federal Government. The people of the United States are our overseers, our oversight committee of 270 million, and they are auditing here today in the Senate.

When Senator BYRD made the comments about auditors, I reflected for a moment about the profound nature of that comment because we are the servants of the people of America. Senator BYRD has delivered many, many erudite presentations, we might call them lectures, perorations on this floor, and they have been put into volumes on the history of the Senate.

I made a comment to Senator BYRD, as pleased as we are to have his talents in the Senate in the year 2001, he may have been born 2,000 years too late; that had he been a Roman senator, the heroes whom he speaks about and lionizes would have even been a greater Roman senate. The Senate is a greater Senate because of the presence of Senator BYRD who is our historian and mentor.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CORZINE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### INTERNATIONAL PARENTAL KIDNAPPING

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to discuss an issue that I have raised many times before, and that is the tragic problem of American children being abducted from this country and taken abroad. This international parental kidnapping is a tragic problem in our country today. One country in particular has had a really poor record of returning abducted children, and that country, amazingly, is the country of Germany. So I am raising this issue again today on the floor because our President, President Bush, will be in Europe next week to meet with German Chancellor Schroeder.

Today's Washington Post has an editorial that discusses how vitally important it is that we make international parental kidnapping a top priority. I could not agree more. Today I have written to President Bush, asking him to raise this issue of international parental kidnapping when he meets with the Chancellor. I am hopeful he will do just that.

Let me take a few minutes to update my colleagues about what is happening in our relations with Germany on this issue. As you know, the Hague Convention on the international aspects of child abduction, which the United States and Germany have both signed, is in place to facilitate the return of internationally abducted children to their countries of "habitual residence" for custody determination. That is where the issue is supposed to be adjudicated. Unfortunately, it has become clear that all countries that have signed the convention do not take their obligations seriously. Germany has performed especially poorly in returning children and allowing family visitation options.

According to the General Accounting Office, 215 Hague Convention cases seeking the return of children have been opened with Germany, just since 1995. Of those cases opened, 172 of them have been closed with the children being returned only 67 times, or 39 percent of the time, and not returned 105 times, or 61 percent of the time.

Because of this disturbing return rate, during the past year both former President Clinton and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright raised with German officials the problems with their country's poor compliance rate.

Additionally, this Senate and the House of Representatives passed a resolution I sponsored which urged the signatories—namely Germany, Austria,

and Sweden—to comply with their Hague Convention obligations.

In response to these efforts, an American-German working group on child custody issues has been established. While this group has made some progress in handling future cases of child abduction, momentum seems to have slowed, and essentially no progress has been made regarding the open cases, either in the return of children to the United States or in allowing left-behind parents adequate visits with their children.

To that end, I believe we simply must not allow Germany or any signatory nation to ignore their convention obligations and turn blindly against the parents who have suffered unbelievable heartache because of the loss of their children.

Ultimately, we cannot understate nor can we ignore the importance of getting these children returned to their homes in the United States. We must make the return of all internationally abducted children a top foreign policy priority.

This is obviously not a partisan issue. Rather, this is a humanitarian issue, an ethical issue, an issue about children and how we can reunite families. I urge my colleagues to support efforts to bring these children home. Ultimately, the great tragedy is not the loss that these parents feel. The great tragedy is that there are children growing up without a parent who wants to be a loving parent but who, because of illegal action of the other parent, no longer can see that child. That is a tragic loss for the child.

Mr. President, I yield the floor. I do note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business. The Senator may proceed.

#### HISTORICAL CHANGES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this has been a historic week in Washington, DC. For the first time in the history of the Senate there has been a change in the leadership of the Senate because of the decision of one Senator to become an Independent and to join the other side of the aisle in forming a new majority. As a result of the decision of Senator JEFFORDS of Vermont, Senator TOM DASCHLE of South Dakota is now the majority leader. The President pro tempore of the Senate is one of the most venerable Members in the history of the Senate, Senator ROBERT C. BYRD of West Virginia. We have also created

a position of President pro tempore emeritus for Senator STROM THURMOND of South Carolina.

Most are aware of the fact that Senator STROM THURMOND breaks a Senate record every day of service. He is 98 years old. This week he went to Bedford, VA, where they noted the anniversary of the D-day invasion on June 6, 1944. Senator STROM THURMOND, at the age of 41, volunteered to fly a glider behind enemy lines in the D-day invasion. It is a great tribute to him that the President asked him to join in the opening of the new memorial to D-day in Bedford, VA. We are very proud of Senator THURMOND and his service to our country. It is an extraordinary story. A man who was 41 years of age on that day still serves his Nation in the State of South Carolina in the Senate.

If this were just a matter of changing titles and the nameplates on offices, one might say what happened this week in the Senate has little bearing on the families across America and their immediate concerns. However, I believe on this side of the aisle there will be changes of great significance to families across the United States.

We are in the midst of debating an education bill. This could easily be one of the most significant pieces of legislation this year. It is a bipartisan bill, supported by President Bush, as well as the Democratic and Republican congressional leaders.

The object of this bill is to modernize the schools of America to prepare them for the 21st century, to make certain that kids going to school in my home State of Illinois or New Jersey or any State across the Nation have a chance for the very best education.

I was really encouraged this week when the Senate agreed to an amendment I offered to increase the money for math and science education. Sadly, in comparison to many countries around the world, the United States does not do its best when it comes to teaching our kids math and science. When you look at the fields of endeavor where the United States is succeeding, particularly in the areas of science and medical research and high technology, math and science are absolutely essential. So this bill will focus not just on reading skills, which are the bedrock of any good education, but also on improving math and science skills for our kids, making certain the teachers standing in the front of the classroom are really qualified to teach the subject so they can energize and excite young students in the fields of math and science.

This bill also calls for accountability, testing of students to make sure they are making progress, investing back in the schools so they can improve their performance.

This week, in Chicago, IL, Mayor Daley announced that Paul Vallas, who has been the leader of the Chicago public school system and its CEO for more than 5 years, is going to move on. Paul

Vallas leaves an extraordinary record in the city of Chicago. He took what was dubbed the Nation's worst school system and has turned it into arguably one of the best of any major city. They stopped social promotion. They started investing in schools—smaller class sizes, better teachers, a new sense of excitement, testing—and if the kids cannot pass the test, they are offered 6 weeks in summer school to catch up. If they still can't pass it, they repeat the grade so they are not pushed along to the next grade, really creating a fiction, when they are handed the diploma, where many of them in years gone by could not even read.

We want every school district to move forward, not just for the wealthiest but for all of our Nation. That is really the hallmark of American democracy, the commitment to public education, the notion that whether you are rich or poor, black, white, brown, a young boy, a young girl, whether you are native born or immigrant, that you have a chance to get an education and a chance to succeed. It says more about America than anything. That is in the pending bill.

When this bill is finished, we are going to move to the Patients' Bill of Rights. What is that all about? The question of who will make medical decisions, your doctor or your insurance company. If the doctor says the best thing for you or someone in your family is a certain medical procedure, we want that doctor's decision to be the last word, not that of a clerk in an insurance company somewhere who is reading from a manual and looking at the bottom line of the quarterly report for the insurance company. We want somebody who is making that decision in your best interest and your family's best interest.

The Patients' Bill of Rights has been an issue that should have been resolved years ago in the Senate, but it was not. With the new Democratic leadership of Senator TOM DASCHLE and a bipartisan effort involving Senator JOHN MCCAIN, a Republican of Arizona, Senator JOHN EDWARDS, a Democrat of North Carolina, and, of course, Senator TED KENNEDY of Massachusetts, we have a chance to pass this bill. I think that is a step forward.

We also want to increase the minimum wage. This used to be an item that was not even debated on Capitol Hill. Regularly we would take a look at the minimum wage and recognize we have to say to the people who are working at the lowest end of the economic spectrum that they have a chance to keep up with inflation. But our minimum wage has been stuck at \$5.15 for years.

In my home State of Illinois, 400,000 people got up this morning and went to work for \$5.15 an hour, many of them working two and three jobs just to keep their families together. We can improve and increase the minimum wage, and we should.