

very remarkable record. He is now the longest serving Senator in the history of the Senate. The Senate, the legislative body that means so much to him, now honors him for his achievement and for the remarkable record of service that he has given to the United States. I appreciate having the opportunity to be a part of our recognition of our colleague and his commitment to public service and the people of his home State of West Virginia.

For almost 48 years now, ROBERT C. BYRD has carried the title of U.S. Senator. I think it is fair to say that no one has done so with a greater awareness of what it means to be a Senator and of all the institution of the Senate represents. He is truly our institutional memory and he is the master of the Senate's rules and procedures. No one knows better than he the precedents and prerogatives of the Senate, and no one is a better protector, promoter and defender of them than he is.

It is not just for the length of his service that Senator BYRD is being honored, however. It isn't so much the years he has served but the service he has provided to the people of the United States and his State of West Virginia that has earned him the accolades he has received and will continue to receive from his colleagues and his constituents.

Our celebration of this moment and all he has achieved is softened by the loss of his beloved wife Erma, his greatest friend and supporter, his companion through life and almost 69 years of marriage, who passed away recently. I am sure she is looking down on us all, proud and thrilled to see Senator BYRD's continued efforts to address the issues of importance to his beloved friends of West Virginia and to note his recognition for being their champion for so many years.

During my service in the Senate I have appreciated working with Senator BYRD on a variety of issues, most recently the Miner Safety Act. We were both there at the President's side as he took up his pen and signed the bill into law. As he did, he noted Senator BYRD's presence because he knew the bill was the result of Senator BYRD's heartfelt concern for the miners of his State, for their safety, and the security of their families.

I have no doubt that if we were to look up the words "constituent service" in any book it would immediately refer us to Senator BYRD's work in the Senate. He has been an active and effective advocate for the people of West Virginia and he has worked tirelessly and diligently to address their needs in the Congress.

Looking back, Senator BYRD's life reads like a Hollywood movie script. He graduated first in his high school class and married his high school sweetheart. He then spent 12 years saving the money he needed to start college.

Through the years that followed, he held a variety of jobs that gave him an

understanding of the needs of the working people of his State. He also developed his talent for the fiddle, and soon became known for that as well. Before long he was a member of the State legislature and, not too long thereafter, he came to the Senate.

Here in the Senate, no one has shown a greater understanding of the history and meaning of the U.S. Constitution and the role it plays in shaping our values and our way of life as Americans. We both have a habit of carrying a copy in our pocket to remind us of our job here in the Senate and our responsibility as Senators to adhere to the provisions of the Constitution and all it says and requires us to do.

Whenever I think of Senator BYRD, the first thing that comes to mind is his incredible knowledge and understanding of world history and the American experience. He also has a profound and substantive mastery of the legacy of the written word. Whenever he takes to the floor to present his views on an issue he always has a ready reference to the precedents of the past, or the words of some great author who had written something appropriate to the moment.

Now, Senator BYRD, the great student of the history of our Nation and so much more, is himself a part of the great story of America and the traditions of the Senate. Every day he joins us here to deliberate on the issues before the Senate, he writes another chapter of his own life's story, a story that will be forever told and retold back in his home State, in the mountains and valleys of West Virginia, by the people who live there who will forever remember him and his legacy as their Senator—a legacy that will never be forgotten.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

1ST SERGEANT MICHAEL MATTHEWS
SERGEANT KENNETH KRAUS
STAFF SERGEANT JACOB LONG

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, it is my honor today to pay tribute to three courageous soldiers from the city of Roswell, GA, whose service to country and community merits grateful recognition.

1SG Michael Matthews has served 21 years in the U.S. Army and Army National Guard and is currently a member of Charlie Co., 108th Armored Regiment, 48th Brigade of the Georgia Army National Guard. On August 30, 2005, Sergeant Matthews was seriously wounded when two Iraqis detonated an Improvised Explosive Device next to his convoy 25 miles south of Bagdad. Sergeant Matthews continues to recover from his injuries, and following his recovery, the Roswell Police Department will welcome him back to his position on the force. Sergeant Matthews worked for 17 years as a uniform police officer and SWAT team member and, in 2005, was named the Police Officer of the Year.

SGT Kenneth Kraus served as a U.S. Marine on duty at the U.S. Embassy in Iran during February of 1979. As revolutionaries overpowered the Embassy, Sergeant Kraus successfully negotiated the release of several American civilians before he was wounded and taken hostage himself. Beaten and interrogated repeatedly, he was given a 20 minute trial and sentenced to die the next day. Sergeant Kraus was pulled from his cell in the hours after his sentence while a representative from the U.S. Embassy finally secured his release. He was flown to Germany for medical treatment and then home to the United States. The Roswell Police Department has been fortunate to have Sergeant Kraus work with them as a detective for over 11 years.

SSG Jacob Long serves as Company Master Gunner in Charlie Co., First Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Brigade of the Georgia Army National Guard. On April 22, 2006, Staff Sergeant Long returned from a year-long deployment in Iraq during which Charlie Co. became responsible for sending Baby Noor, an Iraqi infant with spinal bifida, on a flight to obtain vital treatment in the United States and Baby Noor underwent successful surgery in Atlanta. In addition to his service abroad, Sergeant Jacob has worked with the Roswell Parks and Recreation Department for over 10 years.

These individuals continue to better their community and their Nation with selfless dedication to their careers in public service. I am proud to join the city of Roswell, the State of Georgia, and our Nation in honoring these brave men who have exemplified service to others on the local, national, and international level.

A BLOW TO GUN TRAFFICKING

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, a unique type of gun trafficking sting operation was completed recently. Teams of undercover law enforcement officials wearing hidden cameras traveled to Georgia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia to make purchases which were designed to appear to be what are known as "straw purchases." Straw purchases are transactions that violate Federal law in which one individual submits to the required Federal background check for a gun that is clearly intended to be used by someone else. These purchasers play a crucial role in the illegal trafficking of guns by purchasing with the intention of reselling them to prohibited buyers.

In addition, a lawsuit was filed by the city of New York. The suit, filed in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York in Brooklyn, asks the court to enforce gun laws regarding such sales and require extra training for and supervision of dealers. The lawsuit also seeks punitive and compensatory damages. According to New York City's Web site, its police have