

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and upgrading our roads and bridges, modernizing our public schools and higher education facilities, and replacing outdated water treatment plants, and other municipal projects.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.