

the Department of Defense recommendations. The Congress intended that it be an open process, a thoughtful process, but most importantly an intellectually rigorous process.

While the economies of many of our communities are at stake, this is not the most important reason that we have a BRAC process. This process is intended to assure the Congress and the people that our national security objectives are not compromised in the quest to save money. We know the BRAC process is well underway. It is high time that the Defense Department shed some sunlight on the reasons for their recommendations. The good people of interior Alaska should not be left in the position of defending the future of Eielson Air Force Base on June 15 with both hands tied behind their back, and they should not have to be burning the midnight oil in the hours leading up to that hearing studying material that should have been provided weeks earlier. They do not deserve it, we do not deserve it, and our Nation's security certainly deserves better than this.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALLEN). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

The majority leader is recognized.

#### DEMOCRACY IN LEBANON

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this Sunday the people of Lebanon will go to the polls to vote in their first truly free election in three decades. Since 1990, Lebanon has been occupied by Syrian forces, but this spring the people of Lebanon made history. On March 8, hundreds of thousands of people descended upon Martyrs Square in Beirut, Lebanon's capital, and inaugurated what has become known around the world by people who viewed it as the Cedar Revolution.

For 2 weeks the word spread from city to city and to the countryside. It was clear that freedom was on the march. On March 18, 10 days later, a crowd of 1.5 million people, nearly half of the Lebanese population, gathered in that very square, Martyrs Square, to demand, to insist upon, the withdrawal of Syrian troops and its intelligence apparatus from Lebanon.

These brave and proud citizens of all ages, religions, and ethnicities stood shoulder to shoulder waving their nation's flag in solidarity. Together, with the support of freedom-loving democracies everywhere, they brought an end to Syrian occupation. In less than 2 months, 20,000 Syrian troops pulled out of the country. It was an astonishing wave of events broadcast on television sets and computer screens around the globe.

Lebanon now joins the list of fledgling democracies taking their first bold steps into the future. All of this could not have happened without tremendous courage on the part of the Lebanese people. The determination and vision of one man, President Bush, made it possible. His commitment to democracy and unwavering belief in the fundamental equality of all human beings has wrought remarkable change indirectly, such as in Lebanon, and more directly around the world. Democracy is taking root in even the most inhospitable of lands.

By America's words and our deeds, we are emboldening those who seek freedom and peace. It is an unprecedented moment in the history of the Middle East.

I realized that yesterday as the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, was in our office in this Nation's Capitol. We discussed the future and the hope and the opportunity. As noted scholar and Middle East expert Fouad Ajami says:

The entrenched systems of control in the Arab world are beginning to give way.

Indeed, it is the autumn of the dictators.

I mention Lebanon in part because it has been on my mind the last 4 weeks. It was about 4 weeks ago that I and a delegation had the opportunity, the privilege, of traveling to Lebanon during our April recess. While in Beirut, I had the opportunity to walk through that square, Martyrs Square. I met with leaders of the Cedar Revolution. They represented a diversity of parties and religious sects—Christian, Druze, and Muslim. These leaders were well versed in the requirements for a successfully functioning democracy. In particular, they discussed the needs to restore transparency and accountability, the rule of law, to secure an independent judiciary and to build, to construct, to reconstruct their economy so that the Lebanese people maintain a stake in the future. Their commitment to freedom, to the rule of law, and democratic governance was truly inspiring.

There are many challenges ahead. We share the concern that Syrian intelligence officials have not fully withdrawn from Lebanon. We also know that this election will not, in any shape or form, be perfect. Few elections in times of transition are. But seeing firsthand the determination of the Lebanese people was truly inspiring. I came away optimistic that this moment will lead to a new age of freedom and democracy for the Lebanese people.

In the words of Vaclav Havel, I urge the people of the region:

to never forget these days full of solidarity, hope and common quest for freedom and truth.

To the Lebanese people:

It may be a long and difficult road, but please have faith that the destination is well worth the journey.

#### SENATOR AND ERMA BYRD'S 68TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, on another issue, an issue that was discussed by several of my colleagues, most notably Senator STEVENS, our distinguished colleague from Alaska, the President pro tempore, I rise to honor now a very special day in the life of one of our most respected and venerable colleagues.

On Sunday, the distinguished senior Senator, ROBERT BYRD, celebrates his 68th wedding anniversary with his beloved wife and high school sweetheart Erma Ora James.

The courtship is well known to our colleagues. It is hard to do it full justice, but I will give it a try. The two met in Raleigh County over 7 decades ago, where Erma's father had been transferred from Virginia to work in the coal mines. Senator BYRD had a friend who brought pocketfuls of gum and candy to school, and each day the young ROBERT BYRD would wait at the schoolhouse door and ask his friend for a few pieces of candy. He put them in his pocket and at the first opportunity he would present the candies to Erma as a love offering.

Senator BYRD has said he wasn't really sure if his Erma knew that she was his sweetheart, but she must have found out because the couple ultimately was married in 1937. The day after their wedding, Senator BYRD gave his new bride his wallet which contained several hundred dollars that, over the days and weeks and months, he had saved. He told her that she would be the head of their family finances forever. To this day, Senator BYRD doesn't carry a wallet.

He has said that Erma has been his anchor all these years. They are truly blessed to have one another, their family, and a lifetime of shared memories.

The Bible says:

A man will leave his father and mother, and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

For nearly 7 decades, Senator BYRD and his lovely wife Erma have lived up to the ideal of marriage. I commend them. I admire them. And I wish them both a very happy 68th anniversary.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have had a number of conversations the last couple of days with the distinguished majority leader about this issue of stem cell research. Dr. FRIST—and I say Dr. FRIST because it relates to this matter—indicated he was going to study

this during the break. I think that is very important.

We have the opportunity to work together on legislation—I don't mean he and I, I mean Democrats and Republicans in the Senate. Earlier this week, the House voted to expand the President's stem cell research policy. Passage of the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act was a victory for millions of Americans who suffer from deadly diseases and for their families. It was also a victory for bipartisanship. This bill shares the same level of bipartisanship and support here in the Senate that it did in the House.

Senators HARKIN and SPECTER, who are champions of medical research, have worked hard on this issue. Senators FEINSTEIN, HATCH, KENNEDY, and SMITH have also been leaders on this bill.

I hope when we return from recess, the distinguished majority leader will have had an opportunity to look at this and we can take some time to do this. What I do not want on this bill is to have it offered to Defense authorization or something such as that. I think it would be better if we had free-standing legislation on this. It can be done in a relatively short period of time. I certainly hope so. When we come back, we have a 4-week work period and we can work it in during that period of time.

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

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

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### SENATOR AND MRS. BYRD'S 68TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, it is not often we get the time to just come to the floor to talk about friendships and about what it means to be friends in the Senate. I wish to take some time today to talk about my friend, the former majority leader, former chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and longtime friend, Senator BYRD.

It just so happens that we have spent a lot of time together. I remember so well one great trip to London when we went there for the British-American Parliamentary Conference where we had a great deal of time to talk about the past and our own personal lives.

But I have come to the floor today to ask the Senate to join me in offering

congratulations to my good friend and colleague, Senator ROBERT BYRD, and his wife Erma, who, on Sunday, will celebrate 68 years of marriage. This is an anniversary few of us will ever see, and as far as I can tell—I have checked with the Historian—no Senator has ever had the opportunity to celebrate 68 years of marriage. As a matter of fact, my oldest son Walter and his wife Debbie will celebrate 23 years of marriage on the same day, this Sunday.

Those of us in the Senate have relied greatly upon Senator BYRD's knowledge and love of history. With just a few short days remaining before their anniversary and because we will probably not be in session tomorrow, I think it is appropriate to return the favor and ask the Senate to reflect a moment on ROBERT and Erma's history together as husband and wife.

ROBERT BYRD and Erma James grew up together on the schoolyard of Mark Twain High School in West Virginia. They were high school sweethearts, although Senator BYRD has said himself he is "not sure if [Erma] knew she was my sweetheart." They were. And they were married on May 29, 1937.

Over the years, their family has grown, as Senator BYRD likes to say, "into a brood of fine people." Today, they are proud parents of two daughters and have known the joy of six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

For 68 years, Senator and Mrs. Byrd have shown us what it means to "love, comfort, honor, and keep for better or worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and in health." Their story has been called "one of the great American romances."

Every year, in May, Senator BYRD comes to the floor to reflect on the meaning of Mother's Day and honor the Nation's mothers. His great speeches often mention Erma, the wonderful home she has made for him and their children, and the joy he takes in his family.

Two years ago, when Erma was sick, Senator BYRD stood up during an appropriations debate and told us he was going home. And I quote what he said at that time:

There are only two duties that will exceed my duties in the Senate, one is my duty to God and the second is to my family. I think my duty is to my wife.

Now, these moments are a great reminder to those of us who are married. We have married in this life, and we must do our best to keep the promises we made long ago.

I have had the honor to be married twice myself. One of the reasons I am here today is I remember the great comfort Senator BYRD gave to me when I lost my first wife. He has assisted me and my family in many ways. I also remember when he came to the floor and spoke of my first child in my second marriage and really extolled the concept of marriage at that time.

After 68 years, Erma and ROBERT still have the deep and abiding friendship

that began in Beckley, WV; the love of their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren; and the respect of all of us in the Senate. I know of no other Senator who has celebrated over 50 years of service in Congress, and as I said before, there is no other Senator who could say he celebrated 68 years of marriage. It is an overwhelming accomplishment and really a credit to both ROBERT and Erma.

Earlier this month, in his annual Mother's Day address, Senator BYRD reflected on the early days of his marriage to Erma. He said:

Nearly seven decades ago, we were the rankest of amateurs at marriage and parenthood.

This Sunday, our good friend and his wife will have proven they are now experts in both categories. My wife Catherine and I wish them the best.

Senator BYRD has often marked significant events by submitting works of poetry for the RECORD. I wish I had his capability for remembering poems and works of great art. But today, I offer a poem by the great Alaskan poet, Robert Service, and I offer it in honor of Senator and Mrs. Byrd's 68 years together. Robert Service's poem is entitled "Home and Love," and it goes like this:

Just home and love! The words are small  
Four little letters unto each;  
And yet you will not find in all  
The wide and gracious range of speech  
Two more so tenderly complete:  
When angels talk in heaven above,  
I'm sure they have no words more sweet  
Than home and love.

Just home and love! It's hard to guess  
Which of the two were best to gain;  
Home without love is bitterness:  
Love without home is often pain.  
No! Each alone will seldom do;  
Somehow they travel hand and glove:  
If you win one you must have two,  
Both home and love.

And if you've both, well then I'm sure  
You ought to sing the whole day long:  
It doesn't matter if you're poor  
With these to make divine your song.  
And so I praisefully repeat,  
When angels talk in heaven above,  
There are no words more simply sweet  
Than home and love.

I ask the Senate to remember to congratulate my good friend on 68 years of marriage.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate a member of our Senate family who is nearing an amazing milestone in life—68 years of marriage.

On My 29, 1937, the Valedictorian of Mark Twain High School married his sweetheart—a coal miner's daughter—in West Virginia. That valedictorian was Senator ROBERT BYRD. The coal miner's daughter was Erma Ora James. On Sunday, they will mark 68 years together.

It is an incredible achievement and a testament to their love and commitment.

Look how far they've come. They have seen their lives move from the hills of West Virginia to the highest levels of government. Senator BYRD has gone from gas station attendant to