

The couple married when they were 19 years old. The daughter of coal miners, Erma never forgot her humble beginnings.

As a young couple, the BYRDS enjoyed a simple existence. They could often be found at community square dances where Senator BYRD would be playing his fiddle and Erma would be dancing. From those local dances, to running a grocery business, to raising a family, Erma and Senator BYRD were partners in everything they did.

When Senator BYRD decided to come to the House of Representatives in 1952 and then later entered law school, Erma took the lead in handling the house and bringing up their daughters.

Throughout her life, Mrs. Byrd focused on her family. The Byrds were the proud parents to two daughters, Mona and Marjorie. And they were blessed with six grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

Mrs. Byrd's love of children extended far beyond her family. In West Virginia, Erma Byrd was known far and wide for her advocacy for children and for helping young people get ahead.

Dedicated, determined, loving, and loyal—these were the words many used to describe Erma Byrd. And they are the qualities that our colleague cherished dearly in his wife.

On their 65th wedding anniversary, Senator BYRD said:

Erma and I are complete and whole, a total that is more than the sum of its parts. In my life, Erma Ora Byrd is the diamond. She is a priceless treasure, a multifaceted woman of great insight and wisdom, of quiet humor and common sense. I wish that more people could know the joy I have had in finding one's soul mate early in life and then sharing that deep companionship over many happy years.

Senator BYRD, our thoughts and our prayers are with you and your family. We mourn your loss, and we celebrate the life of the wonderful woman who stood by your side.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this week, if there are no obstructionist tactics, the Senate will begin debate on protecting our country and fixing a broken immigration system.

Since last fall, when I announced the Senate would take up this issue, the Judiciary Committee has spent over 5 weeks, and, as of today, they are in their sixth markup on it. I thank Chairman SPECTER for his leadership throughout this process, during these six markups over the last 5 weeks. The Judiciary Committee members and their staff have worked long and hard under his guidance. As we speak, his committee is in session trying to finish the task set out for them. I, as leader, appreciate that and appreciate their efforts and the tremendous work they have done thus far.

America needs secure borders. Right now, we do not have them. Every day, thousands of people violate our fron-

tiers. We do not know who they are and quite often we cannot stop them. As a nation of immigrants which honors the rule of law, we must secure our borders to make America safe, so we can fix our country's immigration system.

We are a nation of immigrants. We all came from somewhere else, and we have all benefited from America's uniquely inclusive ethos. But America is also a nation of laws. Our laws bind and protect us. They transform us from seekers into citizens and are the very foundation of our democracy.

A nation that cannot secure its borders cannot secure its destiny or administer its laws. The situation along our southern border now ranks as a national security challenge second only to the war on terror.

Before we left for last week's recess, I introduced the Securing America's Borders Act, or SABA, so that the Senate would be able to take up border security and interior law enforcement and allow the Senate to focus on comprehensive illegal immigration reform. It includes a number of commonsense, consensus measures that improve security along our physical border, crack down on human smugglers, simplify the process of deporting wrongdoers, and make it easier for employers to confirm their employees' legal status. And many of its provisions are built from ideas in the 9/11 Commission report.

Why should we act and why should we act now? Well, every day we delay we discover new facts that show us waiting makes America less safe and less secure. To take just one example, in January, officials discovered a massive tunnel stretching nearly a half a mile from Tijuana to San Diego. We do not know how many, or who, snuck in through this tunnel. We do not know what materials came into our country, or when, through this tunnel.

When people break our laws and come through our borders, we do know that mixed in with families looking for a better life are drug dealers, human traffickers, terrorists, and common criminals who cross into our country. Increasing our border security reduces that threat to our country and to our citizens.

The danger is not only to America; there is danger to those who try to cross our borders as well. Unofficial data collected along the Arizona border—the only area for which we have information—show that nearly 225 people died along the border in 2005 alone. About 10 percent perished under circumstances that suggest foul play. And we all know the terrible stories of those who prey on vulnerable migrants, who charge outrageous prices to smuggle them across the border and then, often, abandon them the moment trouble strikes. That is wrong. We must act. And we will do so over the next 2 weeks.

We need better enforcement and more manpower on the ground. Last year, the Senate led the charge to pro-

vide funding to hire 1,000 additional officers, more equipment, and more detention beds. This was a start but only a start.

My proposal adds nearly 15,000 more officers over the next few years in a sustained and focused effort to buttress the 20,000 already deployed to work on border issues. It also requires new investments in unmanned aerial vehicles, cameras, and sensors, and a comprehensive national border security strategy. It establishes the long-term project of building a virtual barrier to cover every mile of the 1,951-mile long border with Mexico. This will both make America safer and reduce the number of people endangering themselves trying to come into this country.

In addition to physically strengthening the border, the bill makes it easier for the Department of Homeland Security to catch people who violate our immigration laws. It enhances the collection of biometric data about who enters the country and allows the Homeland Security Department to set up additional border checkpoints.

The law creates tough, new penalties for human smugglers and document forgers. And under this bill, terrorists, dangerous gang members, and others with serious criminal connections face expedited removal from the United States.

But my bill doesn't just draw on the common sense of the American people for its provisions; it also looks to the 9/11 Commission report for guidance.

Many of the bill's provisions reflect the guidance of that commission. For example, the commission recommended that we consolidate border screening systems. SABA does that. It encouraged the use of biometric data to keep track of who was coming and going. SABA does that. It identified the need of State and local officials to work with Federal agencies to identify terrorist suspects. SABA does that as well.

Securing the border and enforcing our laws are crucial first steps to making America safer. But much more remains to be done. There are over 11 million people in this country illegally today. Congress cannot turn a blind eye to this growing number. We need to act.

As many know, I oppose amnesty. With our economy at full employment, many who break our laws come to this country to do the work others won't do so as to make a better life for themselves and their families. I honor that. America has always been the place where one can come to live out a dream of improvement and renewal. But while we welcome those who refresh and restore our American spirit, we have always done so within a framework of law. The full Senate should have the chance to discuss and to debate and to decide how we balance that rule of law with the situation as we find it today.

I am here to solve problems, not stand around. All Members come here

to act and not to fill space. We need to work together so that all 100 Senators have the opportunity to work within our rules to solve this problem.

I do hope the minority will not put procedural roadblocks in the way of the Senate resolving these issues, so we can put some of our country's best minds to work here on the floor now, this week.

I invite all who have ideas to come and work with us. Together, rather than apart, we can bring the best to bear to solve this problem of illegal immigration so that America is safer, so that America is more secure.

As I said when I introduced the bill we call SABA, I want this coming debate to reflect our history in America as a nation committed to the rule of law and our immigrant inheritance.

I am glad many agree on the need to ensure our debate is in the best keeping of the Senate's traditions. We ought to be honest about the problems we face and the outcomes we seek, within a framework of conversation that does credit to the Senate and the Nation.

This debate, and our effort, is about the American dream and the hope this country holds for so many hard-working people. But it is also an issue about what it means to be a nation. And every nation must keep its citizens safe and keep its borders secure. We should not have to choose between respect for our history and respect for our laws.

With hard work and responsible debate, we can have both. I hope we can conduct this debate with civility and seriousness. I look forward to a thorough and full discussion over the coming days.

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The President pro tempore is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO ERMA BYRD

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, having arrived late Saturday night from Hawaii where we attended the memorial services for Senator INOUE's late wife Maggie, my wife Catherine and I were deeply saddened the next morning to learn that Erma Ora James Byrd had passed away Saturday night. I come to offer our sincere condolences to our good friend Senator BYRD and his family.

As the leader has said, Senator BYRD and Erma were married at the age of 19. In their nearly 69 years of marriage, Erma was a pillar of strength to our friend. She stood by him as he finished

high school and college and attended American University Law School. She was at his side every moment and milestone in his 60 years of public service. As he has often told us, it was Erma who made sure he was polished and well pressed before he left for the Capitol every morning. She took great pride in the work he did for their State and for our Nation.

Erma has been part of our Senate family since the Senator was elected to this body in 1958. Those of us who have served with the Senator have come to know her and love her, and we will deeply miss her.

She was a true southern lady in every sense—intelligent, graceful, and known for her southern hospitality. As Senator BYRD has often mentioned, she never sought the limelight, choosing instead to keep her focus on their family and their home.

Catherine and I were privileged to travel with Erma and Senator BYRD over the years, and my family has always enjoyed being with them. We have looked forward to celebrating Erma's birthday each year. Her annual birthday lunch on Capitol Hill has always included lots of beautiful flowers which Erma loved.

We have also been the recipient of Senator BYRD's good wishes for our family, particularly our children over the years. I remember distinctly the comment that Senator BYRD made on the floor when our first grandchild was born, and he has been very kind to our last child, Lily, who has grown up and known Senator BYRD as one of her "uncles," so to speak. Catherine remembers the many hours Erma spent sewing and knitting on Tuesday mornings for the Senate wives' Red Cross projects. We will not forget how gracious and generous she was when she hosted Members of the Senate and the British Parliament in their home State of West Virginia some years ago. It was a lovely evening up on the mountaintop. Those memories will stay with us forever.

Erma was not only a great partner to Senator BYRD in life, she was a wonderful mother to their two daughters. Senator FRIST has spoken extensively on them. But anyone who wants to understand the depth of the Senator's love for Erma should read the speeches he has come to the floor to deliver each Mother's Day.

In his Mother's Day address in 1997, he said this:

I could not have put in the countless hours required by my office without [Erma's] extreme patience and forbearance, understanding and good humor and support. Erma is the epitome of traditional family values, and my pride in the accomplishments of my daughters and their children is a clear reflection of the values and lessons they learned from their mother and their grandmother.

Mr. President, West Virginia has lost a beloved daughter, and the Senate has lost a dear friend. I think she may have been the longest serving wife of a Senator. Catherine and I extend our deepest sympathies to Senator BYRD, his

family, and all who knew and loved Erma. We are deeply saddened by this news.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic minority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate the life and mourn the loss of a remarkable woman. Erma Byrd, the wife of Senator ROBERT C. BYRD, passed away over the weekend after battling a long illness. Her death brings sadness to the entire Senate family. On behalf of the Senate I wish to extend our condolences to Senator BYRD and their two daughters, five grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

This remarkable couple had been married for 69 years, and anyone who spent time with Senator BYRD knows how much they loved one another. It is clear they took their vows very seriously, to stand by one another in sickness and health. It is a tribute to our colleague and to his late wife that their devotion and love sustained them together for so many years.

As Senator BYRD has said on the floor of the Senate so many times, Erma Byrd has always been his touchstone. He said:

Her faith in me has never wavered and she took to mothering me as effortlessly as she took to mothering our daughters. In Erma Ora James Byrd runs the blood of a great line of mothers, fierce in their devotion to their families, vigilant in their care, loving in their manner.

In a time of increasing callousness and cynicism, the story of ROBERT and Erma Byrd can only be described as a true lifelong love story. Erma and ROBERT BYRD were married when they were both 19 years old. They met when they were students in grade school in Raleigh County, WV.

One of my favorite stories that Senator BYRD tells is about his courtship of Erma. It turns out he decided that the best way to Erma's heart was with another man's candy. His family wasn't prosperous, but the young ROBERT C. BYRD had a friend whose father owned a candy store, and each day that young man would pass out a few pieces of candy to his friends—such as ROBERT BYRD. As tempting as I am sure it was, ROBERT C. BYRD never ate his candy. Instead, he would present it to his girlfriend Erma.

It worked. Those of us who know the two of them know that little exchange of friendship would lead to a lifetime of commitment. I am sure ROBERT C. BYRD had many fine qualities and Erma noticed those, but she also apparently noticed the candy.

A true coal miner's daughter, Erma Byrd met Presidents and Senators, kings and queens, and the greatest among celebrities, yet. She never sought the limelight. She never lost her sturdy and sensible ways. She never forgot the values that sustained her in West Virginia and throughout all her life.

All of us in political life know that we make increasing demands on our