

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

Mr. REID. May I ask the Senator to withhold for a couple minutes?

Mr. COBURN. Absolutely.

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HONORING SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last night I had the honor and pleasure of going to a birthday party. I, personally, never had birthday parties. My mother always said my birthday was too close to Christmas, so I guess we made up for it on Christmas. But the party last night was sensational.

Hundreds of people showed up. They showed up a few days early, but only a few days, because this coming week Senator Robert Byrd will be 90 years old. He holds all kinds of records. I often compare him with the greatest baseball player of all time, Babe Ruth, for obvious reasons.

What a pleasure it has been for me to serve in the Senate, but every day that goes by that I am able to serve in the Senate, I reflect upon how fortunate I am to serve with Senator BYRD and the many courtesies he has extended to me; from the first time I arrived in the Senate, when he asked: Senator, will you agree to conduct hearings for the Interior Subcommittee on Appropriations?

That was as good as scoring a touchdown, to have Senator BYRD ask me to conduct a hearing. He was chairman of that subcommittee, and I did that. When work was to be done on that committee, it didn't matter what I had scheduled, I set it aside so I could satisfy Senator BYRD and do a good job of conducting those hearings.

I wish Senator BYRD happy birthday. As I said last night at the birthday party, I also wish to tell him how much I appreciate all he has done for me personally, all he has done for the people of West Virginia, all he has done for the people of the State of Nevada, and all he has done for our country.

It is such a thought-provoking thing, to think that I have been able to serve with Senator BYRD and serve in some of the positions he has held: Minority leader, majority leader, minority whip, majority whip.

Last night I was so happy. Senator BYRD was his old self. There he was up there in front of everybody, without a note, reciting poetry from memory. I have said it before, but I will say it again, I want him to hear this and I want everyone else to hear this. I have a lot of favored stories about Senator BYRD, but this is my favorite.

I came back from Nevada. I was right back here. Senator BYRD said: What did you do this weekend?

I said: Senator BYRD, I grabbed a little paperback book out of my library and I read "The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe."

Senator BYRD did as I have seen him do many times: Robinson Crusoe? He was on that island 28 years, 6 months, 2 weeks, and 3 days.

I looked at him. I said: What is he talking about? I just read the book. I went back to my home and looked, and there it was. He hadn't read the book for 40 years, but in that computer he has that is a brain, he was able to recall that.

That is only one indication of the abilities of this orphan who is so proud of being from West Virginia. He may have been an orphan growing up, but he is not an orphan in the Senate. He has a family who loves him.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, when Robert C. Byrd was born, America had just sent its first troops to France, an angry mob had just abolished private property in Russia, and the New York Times published its first op-ed piece.

Unfortunately, the "Times" would continue to publish daily editorials in addition to those op-eds. But fortunately for the country and for us, his colleagues, the Lord granted Robert Carlyle Byrd the gift of years—a lot of them.

Next week, Senator BYRD celebrates one more milestone in a long and growing list of them: his 90th birthday. And I think I speak for every Member of this body when I say we are grateful to have lived in an age in which we could serve with such a remarkable man.

Writing about the foundation of any great society, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote:

Not gold, but only men can make a nation  
great and strong  
Men who for truth and honor's sake stand  
fast and labor long  
Real men who work while others sleep  
Who dare while others fly  
They build a nation's pillars deep  
And lift them to the sky

Robert Byrd is such a man. Indeed, those words seem almost to have been written with him in mind.

Senator, we revere you for your many achievements, we thank you for always bringing us back to our purpose here, we wish you a very happy birthday, and many more to come.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oklahoma.

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EXPLANATION OF OBJECTION

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I will take a few short minutes because I know others want to honor Senator BYRD, and there is some other business to discuss. The bill I objected to today comes before us because we have some questions. The chairman of the committee, Senator KERRY from Massachusetts, and Senator SNOWE, the ranking member, have it right, wanting to help our veterans and to make sure they have great opportunities as they return. But I remind my colleagues that this last year, in the SBA, we stole \$26 million worth of their salaries to run that, to do directed earmarks. So we

have this great new leader at the SBA, Steven Preston. Yet we have handcuffed him in his ability to do what he needs to do at the SBA.

We noticed in the paper yesterday a tremendous, large number of loans where things have been faked. The SBA hadn't had the capability of managing the SBA properly. So our purpose in doing this is not to go against the veterans we see. Nobody stands as a greater supporter than I in terms of protecting their privacy, their second-amendment rights, and honoring them.

We do want to do this. The offset that is in this bill comes out of a microloan that is also designed to help veterans. So we are taking money from one area and not the other at the same time we are stealing money from the SBA's operational money to do earmarks that don't do anything to help veterans.

My pledge to both Senator KERRY and SNOWE is to look at this and see if we can't come to some resolution about our concerns over the intervening time between now and the time we come back and make a commitment to try to do that.

But most important is, what we want to do is preserve freedom. An ever-encroaching Federal Government does not preserve the very freedom that those veterans fought for.

I yield.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

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HONORING SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I rise today to wish a very happy birthday today to my colleague, Senator ROBERT C. BYRD, and to say a couple of things about him.

As the majority leader indicated, we had a wonderful reception for him last night, and what was interesting to me was not only the warmth of what it was that those who spoke said of him, but even more important was the fact that in the crowd of 2 or 300, I would say 80 percent of them had come up from West Virginia or were West Virginians who had come from other parts of the country.

It was actually the strongest statement of the evening because it reflects their love and their respect. These were people who would not ordinarily do something such as this because they have other matters they might need to attend to because they are public officials or because of their positions—they are scholars or whatever. But they made their way up here so they could pay their tribute by their presence, even though they could not say a word to Senator BYRD.

That meant a lot to me, to understand—as I do anyway—the way people feel.

I also wish to say one of the things I have always most admired about Senator BYRD is he grew up the hard way.

We have talked about that from time to time, all of us who comment on Senator BYRD, from one birthday to another, and how he persevered and how he never grew discouraged. He had very little means with which to live, but he had something called iron will and a sense of purpose.

It is not entirely clear to me that his sense of purpose was to be directed to the Senate in his early years, when he was working for the military, as a ship builder, as a meat cutter, and doing other things he needed to do, particularly when he was in West Virginia, for the purpose of surviving.

But what actually interests me almost the least about next Tuesday is that it is his 90th birthday. That is not what I think of when I think of ROBERT C. BYRD. I don't think about his age. I think about his absolutely dominant sense of discipline, self-control, purpose, and a willingness to do whatever needs to be done to accomplish a goal for West Virginia.

Senator BYRD and this speaker, this Senator, understand very well how hard it is for West Virginia to succeed, to make strides forward, partly because of the nature of its topography—only 4 percent of the land is flat. There is a very interesting effect of that 4 percent. I think Senator BYRD would agree with me. It causes us not only to have to fit most of the industry in that 4 percent, but a lot of the people are fit into that 4 percent. Therefore, by definition, the word “community,” and from that the word “family,” has a powerful meaning in West Virginia.

I wasn't born in West Virginia. I came to West Virginia as a VISTA volunteer and worked in a very challenged community for 2 years as a VISTA volunteer. It was that sense of family, of people looking out for each other, that turned my life upside down and made me want to stay there and fight for West Virginia.

The phrase “fighting for West Virginia” is what sums up ROBERT C. BYRD, whether it is his 50th birthday or his 90th birthday. It has never changed with him. The fight for West Virginia, in our part of the world, is a sacred cause; No. 1, because it is hard; No. 2, because there are so many people who don't understand West Virginia, don't understand West Virginians.

But then an interesting thing happens. They come to West Virginia on a visit. When they go to the Greenbrier, that doesn't quite count as going to West Virginia. But if they come to the rest of West Virginia, they are usually overwhelmed. This can be reporters, this can be observers, this can be people who are doing business or visiting in West Virginia—they are overwhelmed by the sense of warmth, honesty, integrity, purpose. For the most part, it is a hard life, a fairly low average family income, people living at the margins—some people doing spectacularly well. Many of them leave the State. Many of them stay in the State.

But West Virginia takes work. It takes hard work. That is what Senator

ROBERT C. BYRD is all about and that is what I think of when I think of him on this day, on next Tuesday, or any time in the future: the capacity and the love of hard work. It is a requirement for a Senator from West Virginia, but it has been the particular domain of the senior Senator from West Virginia. Yes, it is true that he has held powerful positions and does hold powerful positions in the Senate. What can one make of that? The fact that he has been here and he has earned those positions.

But he has done everything in his power to help our people and to help our communities. That is essentially what I am here for, but I am staggered by what he has done.

It is not just the building of roads—that is what is usually associated with Senator BYRD—but it is all kinds of work. When you pick up a local newspaper, often somebody—some institution, some college, some volunteer fire department, some research institute at one of our universities or colleges—has been helped by Senator BYRD.

It is work, it is simply hard work.

It is like the memorization which has been referred to so often. It is the power of memory. If you memorize poems, if you memorize books, if you memorize English monarchs, that takes work. It takes a particular type of diligence, fanatical commitment to achieving a purpose. So he can do it on that cerebral side, the intellectual side, and he does it all the time in serving West Virginia.

I can remember in happier days for all of us, when Irma, his beloved wife, was living. I would call him—I would try not to call Senator BYRD too often at home—and she would say: Oh, he is out on the porch having a cigar.

I would feel good. I would feel good because it would be one of the very few times that I had ever heard of Senator BYRD not working but actually sitting on the porch smoking a cigar. Now, he may have been reading the Constitution, he may have been reading the Encyclopedia Britannica, I have no idea. But he was smoking a cigar. Or sometimes he would take a walk with his beloved dog Billy. And those things he treasured.

So he did have his moments of solace and his moments of quietude. I think a particularly hard blow for him, and therefore for my wife Sharon and myself, was the death of his wife. She was the, as they say, moving wind under his wings. He adored her. We have had many conversations about her. Yet when she passed on, it did not change his nature. It saddened him. He does not show his emotions. But it did not change his nature as a worker. So he will be 90, that should be noted as a fact, on Tuesday. But on Tuesday he will also be an incredible fighter for the people of West Virginia and, yes, of the Constitution and, yes, the place of the Senate in our pattern of Government. But, fundamentally, his heart, his work, his attention, over and above what he has given to his family, has

been helping the people of West Virginia. That is what we are elected to do. We all do it in one way or another. Some just do it in a superior way because they have the superior ability and a superior focus and a superior concentration and an overwhelming love for their State, which nurtured them, brought them up, and gave them the values Senator BYRD has.

Senator BYRD, I am tempted at this point to say: Here is to you. But you do not drink. That is another one of your good characteristics. So I am not going to say that. I am just going to say I am extremely proud to be your colleague. I am very moved by every aspect of your career which, I think, in the broad sweep of America, matches anybody.

Lots of people can make money. They have an idea, they turn it into a product, the product sells, they make a lot of money, and then they go buy houses and do things. Very few people have the constancy of purpose and love of State, driven greatly now by the memory of Irma, which is always with you every minute of every day.

So I honor you, Senator BYRD. I wish you a happy birthday, and many happy birthdays to come.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I wish Senator BYRD a happy birthday. I was there at the celebration last night. Senator BYRD is one of the great men in American history. As people will look back on his career, they will see a truly remarkable public servant. It has been my privilege in the 21 years I have been here to watch Senator BYRD, to learn from him. He is a truly remarkable man, a renaissance man, somebody who studied not only American history but world history. He has learned from what he has studied. He brings the wisdom of the ages to this Chamber.

We have enormous admiration for what Senator BYRD has meant to this country, to his State, and to the Senate that he loves so much. We all recognize Senator BYRD and want to honor him on this special day.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Ohio.

#### UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 3074

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 3074, the Transportation-HUD Appropriations Act; that there be 20 minutes of debate with respect to the conference report; with the time equally divided and controlled between Senators MURRAY and BOND or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on adoption of the conference report, without further intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?