

has never changed with ROBERT C. BYRD. His fight for West Virginia is fundamental to his world, which is West Virginia's world. It is in his blood. It is a sacred cause.

It is not just the building of roads, that which is so often associated with Senator BYRD—and to be sure, those roads have transformed our State and connected us with other parts of the Nation and to each other—but so much more. When you pick up a local newspaper, always some institution, some college, some volunteer fire department, some research institute at a university or college has been helped by Senator BYRD. It is his job, but it is also his very special honor at which he excels because of his love for West Virginia.

Ultimately, it is work: it is simply hard work, and ROBERT BYRD never shied away from it for the people of West Virginia, for the Constitution and, yes for this institution, the Senate and its special place in our government and our Nation.

This week, I think of the many birthdays past that he has shared with many of us and with his precious wife Erma, his partner in everything, who gave him the great strength and great faith to reach great heights. It was a little sad to me—and I think to all of us who know him—the cost to him of her death. He changed just a little bit in ways that are hard to explain but ways which are very deep within his soul because he loved and depended on her so much. And I know that as we mark this tremendous milestone today, she is with us with great joy in her heart.

Please allow me to take this special moment to thank my beloved friend and congratulate him on this profound day in the whole history of the Senate, which truly sets him apart from all the rest. I am delighted to celebrate such an incredible milestone.

I wish him a wonderful birthday, many years of service, and all the happiness in the world. But most of all, I thank him for what matters the most to me, and that is his profound service to the people of the State of West Virginia.

For more than half a century, West Virginia has had in ROBERT C. BYRD a great man leading us in our greatest battles. And for that, we are truly blessed.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I rise this morning, along with a group of my colleagues who will be here, to talk about the importance of addressing

health care reform to help small businesses. Senator LANDRIEU is leading this effort, and she is going to be coordinating the speakers this morning.

Mr. President, before I begin, I want to thank Senator ROCKEFELLER for his eloquent comments about Senator BYRD. My family lived in West Virginia for about 30 years and truly appreciated the difference Senator BYRD made for the State, and I am very honored to be able to serve with him, even for a very brief time. So I say to Senator ROCKEFELLER, thank you very much for those comments.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, as the former owner and manager of a small retail business, I know very personally what it is like to worry about meeting the payroll, about whether you can pay for the inventory to keep your business going, about complying with the myriad of regulations you have to comply with.

As a former Governor, I certainly understand it is business and not government that creates jobs and drives new ideas and innovation. But I also know that government has a vital role to play in addressing the challenges businesses and small businesses face, especially in these very difficult economic times. One of those challenges small businesses are struggling with is the high cost of health care.

In New Hampshire, between 2002 and 2006, small businesses paid 42 percent more in premiums for health insurance for their employees; and for our smallest businesses, those with fewer than 10 employees, the increase was almost double that—a 71-percent increase in the cost of premiums.

So what does that mean for the small businesses and their employees who want health care? It means small businesses have to make the tough decision to either drop coverage for their workers or to increase the employee contributions, often to the point where their workers cannot afford coverage.

Everywhere I go in New Hampshire, I hear from small business owners who tell me about these tough decisions they face. I heard this concern from Adria Bagshaw who testified this summer at a Small Business Committee field hearing Senator SNOWE and I did in Portsmouth, NH. Adria and her husband Aaron own the W.H. Bagshaw Company, a fifth-generation family manufacturing company in Nashua, NH. They offer health insurance to their 18 employees and cover a portion of the monthly premium for them. But with those premiums at \$1,100 per month per family, they spent more on health insurance for the first half of this year than they spent on the raw materials they need to make their products at their manufacturing company. Understandably, Adria worries they are going to need to cut back on the quality of health insurance plans they offer their employees or the

amount the company covers to help pay for those premiums.

I have also heard from people such as Chick Colony who is a small business owner in Harrisville, NH. He has a wonderful weaving company that has been in Harrisville for generations. He e-mailed me, saying:

The cost of health insurance is the biggest problem that our small . . . business faces.

They have 24 employees. He went on to say:

The present system is expensive, inefficient and broken. I can't tell you how the 20 to 35 percent annual rate increases depress us all and there is no end in sight. Over the past five years, most of our employees have had to drop coverage because they simply can't afford to pay their share of the premium. I really believe that the time has come to put the existing system out of its misery.

Certainly we hope we can do that.

I have also heard from Kevin Boyarsky, who is an owner of a small printing company in Concord. He told me:

Health insurance premiums have gone up 30 percent last year and 22 percent the year before. It's now a very big item in our company's budget. We want to grow and be competitive, but the high costs make it hard. From a small business perspective, I can't attract employees without good coverage, but if I hire you now, I'll only be able to offer you 50 percent of the individual plan. It's all I can afford and it isn't very attractive to employees.

Small businesses in New Hampshire and across the country are burdened by high premiums for health insurance. In fact, statistics show us that small businesses pay, on average, 18 percent more than large plans for the same insurance policy. And for small businesses that do not offer their employees health insurance, they cite the high cost of premiums as the reason why.

We need comprehensive health reform to help these small businesses. The small business owners I have spoken with want to offer insurance to their employees, both because they believe it is not only the right thing to do, but it is critical to being competitive, to recruiting and retaining good employees. But as they so often tell me, the high cost of insurance stands in their way.

Health reform is critical to these folks. We can help them by passing comprehensive insurance reforms that rein in health care premiums, so it stabilizes costs, and provide tax credits to small businesses to help them afford the cost of health insurance. I believe we must take these measures to help level the playing field for small businesses and to make insurance premiums more affordable.

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. That is where most of the jobs in this country are created. We have to control health care costs to relieve the financial burden, so that so many of these small businesses in New Hampshire and across the country no longer have to face the choice of whether they can keep health insurance or hire employees.

I urge all of my colleagues to work together so we can pass comprehensive health reform legislation. We need to pass it, and we need to pass it soon.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, as the 100th Member of the Senate, it is my great honor to pay tribute to this body's longest serving Member, Senator ROBERT C. BYRD of West Virginia, on the occasion of his record-setting 20,774th day as a Member of Congress.

I have the fondest memories, as a young staffer here, of listening to the sounds of Senator BYRD's fiddle wafting from his suite on the first floor of the Russell Senate Office Building. And I am proud today, as I do most days, to wear a wristwatch which was given to me, generously, by Senator BYRD over 20 years ago as I was completing my tenure as chairman of the Democratic Party of the United States.

I pay tribute to Senator BYRD on behalf of myself and the people of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, but I also pay tribute on behalf of my predecessor and a great friend of Senator BYRD's, former Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts.

It is true that Senator Kennedy and Senator BYRD did not always see eye to eye on every issue. Senator Kennedy used to joke that it was Senator BYRD who taught him how to count votes in their whip race in 1971. Actually, he taught us both how to count votes because I was a young aide to Senator Kennedy in his whip's office at the time and it turned out that Senator BYRD clearly could count votes more accurately than we could.

Over the years since, Senator Kennedy was always proud to be in this Chamber when his friend Senator BYRD would speak. As Senator Kennedy once said, he knew Senator BYRD was an expert on the Roman Senate, and he was sure Senator BYRD's "wisdom and oratorical skill would make even Cicero envious."

Senator BYRD and Senator Kennedy shared a love of the Senate, and they shared a love of poetry. One poem they returned to over the years was entitled "A Psalm of Life" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Senator BYRD, of course, knows this poem by heart, and so I need not read it all today. Instead, let me recite the last few stanzas to the Senate and for the RECORD, as these words sum up the force that is Senator BYRD:

"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;
"Footprints that perhaps another
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother
Seeing, shall take heart again

"Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait."

Throughout his brilliant career, Senator BYRD has made so many footprints on the sands of time. He has touched, taught, and inspired hundreds of colleagues from every State and thousands upon thousands of Senate staff members have marveled at his genius, his dedication to the people of West Virginia, and his unparalleled service to the Senate and to this country.

I join all my colleagues in wishing him well on this special day in the history of the Senate, and I congratulate him on his incredible service to the State of West Virginia, to the Senate of the United States, and to the United States of America.

We thank you, Senator BYRD, for your service, and we congratulate you.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, let me commend my colleague, the Senator from Massachusetts, for his comments about Senator BYRD. I also want to join in recognizing and celebrating Senator BYRD's service to West Virginia and to our country. As a new Member to this body, I did not have the occasion to work as closely with Senator BYRD as others. However, as a resident of the Commonwealth of Virginia, not only did I follow the enormous respect Senator BYRD has engendered here in the Senate, but I have also watched with awe Senator BYRD's ability to bring jobs back to West Virginia. He was able to relocate many Federal agencies and activities, oftentimes that may have previously resided in Virginia, to the State of West Virginia.

I join my colleagues in commending Senator BYRD, not only for his enormous service to this body and to our country, but as someone who has been a tireless advocate for his home State of West Virginia.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I join my colleagues in commenting on and thanking Senator BYRD for his extraordinary leadership, not just for the people of West Virginia but the people of our Nation—in fact, to millions of people around the world—because of the policies he has driven here, the speeches, the words he has put behind so many of the most remarkable policy decisions over the last half century. His work has had enormous impact, again, not just in his State and in our Nation but worldwide.

I am speaking also as a Senator from Louisiana to give firsthand witness to his sensitive and timely and extraordinary leadership after the Katrina and Rita disasters, now almost 4½ years ago; it will be 5 years this August. That is hard to believe. The hurricanes and the subsequent levee failures devastated one of the great cities in America and one of the great regions. There were very few people who stood up in

Washington. The administration at the time had a hard time grasping the scope of the disaster. But there was one person who understood. There were several others, but one in particular understood—amazingly, without even having gone down there, which was very hard to understand if you didn't go to New Orleans or south Louisiana. But he instinctively understood because of his compassion and great empathy that has been developed over a lifetime of caring, giving, understanding, and listening.

Senator BYRD heard the cries of the people and he responded. Because of his leadership on the Appropriations Committee, despite having so much stacked against us, he was able to step up. I will never forget and the people of our State will never forget the friend we have had in Senator BYRD. He continues, to this day, to watch after our recovery and support it. When New Orleans makes its 300th anniversary, which will be 2018—our city will be 300 years old—there will be a person who needs to be thanked on that day for helping the city to reach its 300th birthday, and that would be the great Senator from West Virginia ROBERT C. BYRD.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today I have the great privilege of rising to pay tribute to my chairman, the longest serving Senator in the history of this country, the senior Senator from West Virginia, ROBERT C. BYRD.

He has reached a milestone among many in his career. It is an extraordinary record of service and dedication and patriotism to the country, and it reflects the values of the people of West Virginia and of this great Nation. Senator BYRD's extraordinary service is measured not just in length but accomplishments, but the length is impressive, indeed. He has 20,744 days of service as a Member of Congress—over 56 years, 10½ months. Over that time, Senator BYRD has cast over 18,500 roll-call votes, witnessed the inauguration of 11 Presidents, and he has been successful in 15 out of 15 elections.

For over 60 years, Senator BYRD has represented the people of West Virginia tirelessly, with a great deal of energy and a great deal of success. He started in the West Virginia House of Delegates and then was elected to the West Virginia State Senate. Then he went to the U.S. House of Representatives. Finally, he came here to the U.S. Senate, where he is currently serving in an unprecedented ninth full term.

I think Senator BYRD's success is a reflection of his steady progress, learning first about the people of his home State as he worked among them, knowing them well because they were his friends and neighbors; and then going on into local government and dealing with the concerns as a State representative and then as a State senator; and then coming to the House of Representatives, understanding the operation of the House and how he could help the people of West Virginia; and finally, he coming here to the U.S. Senate.