

That is why I introduced the Homeless Women Veterans and Homeless Veterans with Children Act and it is why it's so important that we move quickly to pass it.

My bill would take three big steps forward toward tackling the serious problems facing this vulnerable group.

First of all, it would make more front-line homeless service providers eligible to receive special needs grants.

This would help organizations in Washington State and across the country help support families like Natalie's.

It would also expand special needs grants to cover homeless male veterans with children as well as the dependents of homeless veterans themselves.

And it would extend the Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program to provide: workforce training, job counseling, child care services, and placement services to homeless women veterans and homeless veterans with children.

It is so important that we not just provide immediate support but we also make sure our veterans have the resources and support they need to get back on their feet.

This is a very personal issue for me.

Growing up, I saw firsthand the many ways military service can affect both veterans and their families.

My father served in World War II and was among the first soldiers to land on Okinawa. He came home as a disabled veteran and was awarded the Purple Heart.

Like many soldiers of his generation, my father did not talk about his experiences during the war. In fact, we only really learned about them by reading his journals after he passed away.

And I think that experience offers a larger lesson about veterans in general. They are reluctant to call attention to their service, and they are reluctant to ask for help.

That is why we have got to publicly recognize their sacrifices and contributions.

It is up to us to make sure that they get the recognition they have earned.

And it is up to us to guarantee they get the services and support they deserve.

This bill passed through the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee with strong bi-partisan support.

Because supporting our veterans should not be about politics, it should be about what kind of country we want the United States to be. And about what our priorities are as a nation.

That is why I am proud to stand here today: for Natalie, her children, and families just like hers across the country.

At this time, with our economy struggling—it is a very tough time, particularly for our veterans who are returning home—the most vulnerable population today is our women because many of the transitional housing and projects for our veterans don't have facilities for women or for women with children or, as a matter of fact, for

men who are veterans coming home to young children.

So this is an extremely important piece of legislation. This had bipartisan support coming out of our committee. I will keep coming to the floor to ask for unanimous consent because I cannot go home and look at someone who served our country with distinction and honor who today is living on the street because the Senate is objecting. I will just let my colleagues know I will keep working on this because it is the right thing to do.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

GULF OILSPILL

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, I wish to give the Senate a report on the gulf oilspill.

Mother Nature is now developing hurricane and it is very likely within a couple of days of reaching hurricane strength, which is 75 miles per hour or greater, but Mother Nature is smiling on us in that it is going on a more westerly track. It will probably go into the coast at northern Mexico, possibly southern Texas, but it will keep it away from heading into the area to the east of Louisiana where the oilspill is. Of course, if it had gone on that trajectory, then one of the worst nightmares would be that it takes all that oil on the surface, and in the rage of a hurricane, the counterclockwise rotation of the winds would take that right on to shore over the barrier islands, into the bays and estuaries where oil, once contaminating all the marsh grasses, becomes so difficult to get out.

The effects of that we don't know. It could be for years to come, just as we don't know the effects of the subsurface oil that is there, that the scientists have identified, that BP denies, that even some of our Federal officials in NOAA deny. We are waiting on their report. Of course, we won't know the effects of that for years. We have a lot of uncertainty here. But at least for the moment, the hurricane is not bearing down on the oilspill, although let me remind my colleagues that we have a very active hurricane season coming up.

What it is going to do, this first hurricane, is make the seas choppy and the waves large, even that far away. As a result, the skimming operations are going to be thwarted.

That brings me to the topic of the skimming operations.

I am grateful, since the U.S. Navy had identified 27 additional small skimmers that are stationed in ports around the country, that those have now been tasked to come to our inland waterways that are calm waters such as ports so that when the oil comes through the passes, through the inlets and gets into those calm water bays, we will have those skimmers there positioned to try to get it skimmed up before it gets into the marsh grasses. But why did it take so long? Why, of the 27, have only 9 been put on trailers and are on their way to the gulf? Why are the remaining 18 having to go through the legal ramifications, which I understand the law is the law, not to be completed until June 30, which is tomorrow, but why wasn't this done weeks ago? Because people do not have the sense of urgency that we do down on the gulf coast. They are not seeing their lives destroyed and their livelihoods eliminated and their culture completely changed.

Of course, the effects of this for years, with 60,000—now people are finally getting around to acknowledging that it is 60,000—barrels of oil a day gushing into the gulf. It is filling up the gulf. It is affecting us and our way of life.

There are how many States on the gulf? Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and the big one, with the most coastline, Florida, my native land. How many is that? That is five. The remaining 45 States are not affected. They can see it nightly on the TV. They can rant and rave, and they can see that gusher that continues. It is there on TV for us to see, and we can be mad about that. But unless one lives there and understands the daily effect on people's lives, they can't get that sense of outrage we have. So is it any wonder I have such impatience when five of my counties on the gulf coast have submitted requisition forms for the moneys they have advanced and they still have not been paid? Is it any wonder I have a sense of outrage when I see people lose incomes because cancellations are coming in on a daily basis? Is it any wonder I have a sense of outrage when I see local governments not being able to plan on their budgets because they don't know what their local tax revenue is going to be because of a diminution of business? Is it any wonder those of us on the gulf have a sense of outrage as we see the fear, the trepidation, the anxiety about the future about what their livelihoods are?

I am going down to the White House now to talk about the one thing we can make something good come out of this travesty, and that is the future of trying to wean ourselves from our dependence on oil by aggressively going after

alternative energy sources. I hope out of this tragedy that will be one of the outcomes and that it will be led vigorously. But that sense of outrage I don't see. I am going to try to express it in the next few moments.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington.

REMEMBERING SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I come to the floor this morning to pay my respects to a most amazing man who the Senate Chamber has lost, Senator ROBERT C. BYRD. It certainly is a sad day for the Senate, for all the people of West Virginia who loved this man so much, and for the entire country, as we mourn the loss of the Nation's longest serving Senator.

ROBERT C. BYRD was a historian, a poet, and he truly was a master of the Senate. We have heard a lot about this remarkable man. A lot of it bears repeating today. He was the longest serving Member in the history of this institution. He had courage. He had humility. He had intelligence. He had a vision that helped lead the Senate for many years. But he also showed us that one can change over time and admit their wrongs and move on and fight for what they believe is right.

His principled stands are what I will remember most about him. I was so proud, back in 2002, to stand with him and a total of 23 Senators who voted against the Iraq war. I will not forget how strong he was, reminding us that as a country we do not have to act out of fear. I was proud to stand with him many times since then, when he would knowingly wink at me and remind us of the 23 who stood tall in the Chamber that day.

His floor speeches were legendary. I remember so many times throughout my tenure with him as he railed on the floor about whatever passion he had at the moment, whether it was his little dog he would tell us a story about or some part of history he wanted to remind us of, always with a point at the end. I remember his compassion as he spoke, and his flailing arms. He always reminded us that we are human beings here. He had a true way with words, and he literally wrote the book on the Senate. Most importantly, he protected this institution from every attack.

To his very last days here he was weighing in on proposed changes to the filibuster rule, a rule he played a central part in reforming three decades ago.

But the true honor of serving with Senator BYRD came from his personal touch. I personally so remember my very first meeting many years ago with Senator BYRD. I came here as a brandnew Senator in 1993. I wanted to serve on the Appropriations Committee, the committee he chaired. It is a very powerful committee. It was a big ask for a freshman Senator coming

in. I was told that in order to get that seat, I would have to call him up and ask for a personal meeting. That was pretty intimidating, coming here brandnew and asking for a meeting with the chair of the entire Appropriations Committee.

He granted the meeting. I remember walking over to the Capitol to his office and not knowing what to expect. I couldn't have known what to expect because, when I walked in, I found this warm, wonderful, cordial human being. He regaled me with stories from his youth and talked about being a coal miner's son and the poverty he grew up in. He showed me his fiddle he was so proud of but that he played no more. He told me poetry he recited from memory. I remember sitting in his office and thinking: I can't believe I am sitting here with a part of history. Then, of course, he grilled me on my stance on the balanced budget amendment and the line item veto before he said: Yes, I would like you to serve on my committee.

I have been so proud to serve on that committee with him ever since. He taught me so much about protocol, about managing legislation, about the rules of the Senate, about respect. Yes, respect was what I think I learned from him most. He was a taskmaster. He believed passionately in the rules of the Senate, but he also believed in working together for the common good.

In the first year I was here, Senator Hatfield, Republican from Oregon, and Senator BYRD were the chair and ranking member on the Appropriations Committee. Senator BYRD called and asked me to come to lunch in his office with a small group of Senators, with Senator Hatfield and myself and several Democrats and Republicans. I was so honored to be asked, and I came over not knowing what to expect. Senator BYRD and Senator Hatfield, a Republican and Democrat, a chair and a ranking member of the most powerful committee, the Appropriations Committee, sat and talked to us about what they felt was being lost from the Senate and that, as new Members, it was our responsibility to return the Senate to. That was respect and listening to each other. They told us in words about how "one year I might be chair," said Senator BYRD, "but I know full well an election will change things and Senator Hatfield will become chair. So we better work together, and we better respect each other, as we put our bills together. Because you never know when you are going to be in the minority or the majority."

Their words were powerful. But even more powerful was sitting there listening to these two gentlemen, a Republican and Democrat, listen to each other, laugh together, have lunch together, and pass on a lesson to those following us about what we all need to be when we call ourselves United States Senators.

Senator BYRD earned many titles over the years: majority whip, major-

ity leader, chairman of the Appropriations Committee. But I know the title he cherished the most was husband. His love of his family trumped everything else.

I so remember one time my husband, who lives out in the State of Washington—as my colleagues know, I travel home every weekend to be with my family—one weekend my husband came out here to be with me. Why? Because it was our anniversary. I was going to be here voting so he traveled here from Washington State and came into the Capitol. As he was coming in, I met him. Senator BYRD happened to be leaving the Senate Chamber. He saw my husband and he welcomed him and said: What are you doing out here in the other Washington? My husband said: It is our anniversary. Senator BYRD said: Well, which anniversary is it?

Rob said to him: It is our thirty-second. Senator BYRD paused and nodded, and he said: That is a good start.

He had been married for 67 years. He was going home to be with his wife. That is a moment I will cherish, because it sets in perspective all that I know about Senator BYRD. He taught by example. He taught by words. He knew humor and how to use it. But most of all, he had respect for every one of us here.

He was a gentleman. He certainly was tough. But he treated everyone with dignity and respect. Everyone here on this floor has been molded by his presence. We have learned so much from him, and he will be missed.

But I know for certain his work and his passion and his spirit will never be gone from this Senate he loved so much, and I know as I walk on this Senate floor, I will try and remember, as he taught me so well, respect of others above all.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, how much time is remaining in morning business on our side?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is 9½ minutes remaining.

Mr. DURBIN. Thank you very much.

Madam President, yesterday I joined Senator MURRAY and others in giving my tribute to Senator BYRD, and I will not repeat my remarks. But I look forward to other Members coming to the floor with their own memories and reminiscences of this great man who served this Nation and the State of West Virginia so honorably for so long and the fact that I was honored to serve with him for 14 years in the Senate.

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I know an issue that was always important to ROBERT BYRD was the working men and women of West Virginia. If there was one thing that innervated him and inspired him, it was the memory of his youth and growing up in the