

With proven and lasting results, Head Start is a wise investment in our future. I applaud the good work of the HELP Committee, and thank Senators KENNEDY, ENZI, DODD, and ALEXANDER for their efforts on behalf of low-income children across the Nation.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to join Senator REID, and all of my colleagues, in congratulating Senator ROBERT BYRD on reaching yet another historic milestone in his lifetime of public service.

To have the privilege of casting even one vote in the U.S. Senate is an honor. To cast 18,000 votes in this Senate is a legend.

It is a feat that has never been achieved before, and very likely never will be again.

His 18,000 votes in this Senate are more than a singular statistic. They are yet another measure of ROBERT C. BYRD's lifetime of devotion to his state, our Nation, this institution, and to the U.S. Constitution.

Senator BYRD is, of course, a great student of history—and the author of the definitive work on the history of the U.S. Senate. In fact, one could say that ROBERT C. BYRD is Senate history.

Think about this: In addition to being the only Senator ever to cast 18,000 votes, Senator BYRD is also the first U.S. Senator ever to cast 15,000 votes.

Senator BYRD has served with—not under, with—11 Presidents.

He has served as majority leader and held more leadership positions than any Senator in history.

To help put the length of his service in perspective, consider a few facts: When Senator BYRD cast his first vote in the Senate—on January 8, 1959 his colleagues included Senators John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. Vice President Richard Nixon was the presiding officer. Hawaii was not yet a state. And a state-of-the-art computer would have taken up half of the space of this Chamber and had roughly the same amount of computing power as a Palm Pilot.

Today, Senator BYRD is a hero among bloggers and so many others because of his unyielding dedication to our Constitution and his obvious love of our Nation and the principles for which it stands.

He is the unrivaled expert on Senate rules.

He has been a candidate for election 12 times—9 times as a candidate for the U.S. Senate and 3 times as a candidate for the U.S. House. He won every time.

And he has become perhaps the most popular political figure in West Virginia history. He was named West Virginian of the Century by the residents of his home State.

It is an honor to serve with this giant of Senate history, and to share with him this milestone. Again, I commend him and congratulate him.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President. I stand today to honor my dear friend and colleague, Senator ROBERT C. BYRD.

Few of us can truly hold claim to the title of living legend—but ROBERT C. BYRD can. This afternoon he cast his 18,000th vote. A remarkable record that reflects his years of dedicated, passionate and heartfelt service to the people of West Virginia and the Republic he so loves.

Eighteen thousand is an impressive number. But what is more impressive is the change that those votes had on America. He voted to strengthen Social Security for all Americans. He voted to turn the dream of college education into a reality for all students. He voted to ensure that those who put in an honest day's work receive an honest day's wage. He voted to protect the health and safety of coal miners. And, he voted to ensure that those who serve in uniform would get the benefits they deserve. Quite frankly, his voting record, and its impact on the fabric of our country, is immeasurable.

Along the way, his votes and his voice became the conscience of the Senate. Reminding us all that change is never easy, and that following the rules matters. That we can disagree with each other, even an administration, but we can ill afford to be disagreeable with each other.

It is impossible to picture the history of the last 50 years without thinking of ROBERT C. BYRD's impact and influence on all of our lives. I am incredibly honored to serve every day with my dear friend and colleague—he is an inspiration to us all.

S. CON. RES. 21 CHANGES

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, section 309 of S. Con. Res. 21, the 2008 Budget Resolution, permits the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee to revise the allocations, aggregates, and other appropriate levels and limits for legislation that reauthorizes the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, makes changes to the Payments in Lieu of Taxes Act of 1976, or both, so long as that legislation does not worsen the deficit over the period of fiscal years 2007 through 2012 or fiscal years 2007 through 2017.

I find that Senate amendment No. 1704 offered by Senator BAUCUS to Senate amendment No. 1502 satisfies the conditions of the deficit-neutral reserve fund for county payments legislation. Therefore, pursuant to section 309, I am adjusting the aggregates in the 2008 budget resolution, as well as the allocation provided to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

I ask unanimous consent that the following revisions to S. Con. Res. 21 be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008—S. CON. RES. 21; REVISIONS TO THE CONFERENCE AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 309 DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR COUNTY PAYMENTS LEGISLATION

(In billions of dollars)

Section 101:	
(1)(A) Federal Revenues:	
FY 2007	1,901.520

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008—S. CON. RES. 21; REVISIONS TO THE CONFERENCE AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 309 DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR COUNTY PAYMENTS LEGISLATION—Continued

(In billions of dollars)

FY 2008	2,018.073
FY 2009	2,114.167
FY 2010	2,169.484
FY 2011	2,350.294
FY 2012	2,489.580
(1)(B) Change in Federal Revenues:	
FY 2007	— 3.186
FY 2008	— 32.723
FY 2009	7.241
FY 2010	5.763
FY 2011	— 44.256
FY 2012	— 107.516
(2) New Budget Authority:	
FY 2007	2,376.348
FY 2008	2,496.522
FY 2009	2,517.896
FY 2010	2,570.370
FY 2011	2,685.483
FY 2012	2,719.714
(3) Budget Outlays:	
FY 2007	2,299.749
FY 2008	2,468.780
FY 2009	2,566.479
FY 2010	2,600.013
FY 2011	2,692.447
FY 2012	2,703.920

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008—S. CON. RES. 21; REVISIONS TO THE CONFERENCE AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 309 DEFICIT-NEUTRAL RESERVE FUND FOR COUNTY PAYMENTS LEGISLATION

(In billions of dollars)

Current Allocation to Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee:	
FY 2007 Budget Authority	5,016
FY 2007 Outlays	5,484
FY 2008 Budget Authority	5,071
FY 2008 Outlays	4,757
FY 2008–2012 Budget Authority	25,838
FY 2008–2012 Outlays	24,730
Adjustments:	
FY 2007 Budget Authority	0
FY 2007 Outlays	0
FY 2008 Budget Authority	565
FY 2008 Outlays	565
FY 2008–2012 Budget Authority	3,745
FY 2008–2012 Outlays	3,745
Revised Allocation to Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee:	
FY 2007 Budget Authority	5,016
FY 2007 Outlays	5,484
FY 2008 Budget Authority	5,636
FY 2008 Outlays	5,322
FY 2008–2012 Budget Authority	29,583
FY 2008–2012 Outlays	28,475

TRAGEDY IN CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise briefly to speak for a few moments about the horrible tragedy we witnessed Tuesday morning in Charleston, SC: the death of nine firefighters: Captain William "Billy" Hutchinson, Captain Mike Benke, Captain Louis Mulkey, Engineer Mark Kelsey, Engineer Bradford "Billy" Baity, Assistant Engineer Michael French, Firefighter James "Earl" Drayton, Firefighter Brendon Thompson, and Firefighter Melvin Champaign.

Clearly, this loss is one of profound sadness for the Charleston community and, indeed, for the entire Nation. My thoughts and prayers go out to these firefighters' loved ones, families, friends, and colleagues.

These nine brave men died while fighting a horrific multialarm fire in which two people were ultimately

saved. In other words, they selflessly gave their lives while ensuring the safety and well-being of others. This is the ultimate sacrifice of a firefighter—a sacrifice that has been made by 3,148 men and women since 1981.

We must never forget the dangers firefighters across our Nation dauntlessly face each and every day—dangers that have their roots in nature or mankind. Whether responding to fires, natural disasters, or acts of terrorism, our firefighters risk and give their lives extinguishing fires, delivering lifesaving emergency medical services, conducting search and rescue missions, and responding to and handling hazardous biological and radiological agents. Our Nation's firefighters certainly do not perform these duties for any self-glorification. They perform these duties because each and every one of them answers a noble call to serve this country and protect its people from harm.

Woodrow Wilson once wrote that “. . . loyalty means nothing unless it has at its heart the absolute principle of self-sacrifice.” Clearly, the loyalty of these nine firefighters—loyalty to duty, country, and each other—were tragically demonstrated overnight Monday. May we mourn them and draw inspiration from their actions. May we never forget them.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, tomorrow in Charleston will be a citywide day of mourning for the nine firefighters who died, rushing into the blazing furniture store to try to save a life. I rise to pay my respects to those fallen heroes and to their families.

The other day, when I heard the fire chief, Rusty Thomas, say he lost nine of his best friends, I know what he meant. So does every Senator in this Chamber because firefighters are the best things our communities have.

They risk their lives every day we lay a heavy, heavy responsibility on them. But think of how many countless lives are saved because of their dedication, because they will find the people trapped inside a burning building.

I remember when our former colleague from Charleston, Senator Hollings, had the terrible fire that burned his home, it was those same South Carolina firefighters who came to help one of our own.

Whether they are in Charleston or the volunteers in Claymont, DE, where I come from, when they are done putting out a blaze, you can find them organizing the little league teams or grating the baseball diamonds or taking care of the boy and girl scouts. They are the grit that makes this country great.

What happened in South Carolina reminds all of us just how important firefighters are to our communities, how brave these people are, and how dangerous their work is.

We saw it during Hurricane Katrina, when 1,000 firefighters who themselves lost their homes and their cars, whose

whole lives were turned upside down, spent day after day rescuing people from rooftops.

We saw it on September 11, when that grizzled fireman came out of the debris of human flesh and cement and steel to become the face around the world of America's determination.

Three hundred forty-three firemen were lost on that terrible day. And the tragedy in Charleston is the single greatest loss of firefighters in the nation since then.

Just as the spirit of those firefighters on September 11 helped lift America off our knees, I hope that the grief Charleston feels this week will be lifted by the legacy of their fallen heroes.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT MICHAEL A. BECHERT

Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart and deep sense of gratitude to honor the life of the brave staff sergeant from Indiana, Michael Bechert, 24 years old, died on June 14 from injuries sustained on May 30, 2007, in Baghdad, Iraq, when his vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device. With his whole life before him, Michael risked everything to fight for the values Americans hold close to our hearts, in a land halfway around the world.

An Indiana native, Michael last resided in Germany where he met his wife Daniela. In addition to his military service, Michael was a devoted husband and the father of their 20-month-old boy, Branden. “He was a great father, husband. A young, fresh young man. He fought for his country and died for it,” said Daniela. Along with his wife and son, he leaves behind his father Michael L. Bechert and his grandparents George and Doris Bechert who raised him.

Michael was assigned to C Company, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division in Schweinfurt, Germany. He was killed during his second deployment in Iraq, while serving his country in Operation Iraqi Freedom. During his first tour of duty he was injured and deservingly awarded the Purple Heart.

Today, I join Michael's family and friends in mourning his death. While we struggle to bear our sorrow over this loss, we can also take pride in the example he set, bravely fighting to make the world a safer place. It is his courage and strength of character that people will remember when they think of Michael, a memory that will burn brightly during these continuing days of conflict and grief.

Michael was known for his dedication to his family and his love of country. Today and always, Michael will be remembered by family members, friends and fellow Hoosiers as a true American hero, and we honor the sacrifice he made while dutifully serving his country.

As I search for words to do justice in honoring Michael's sacrifice, I am re-

minded of President Lincoln's remarks as he addressed the families of the fallen soldiers in Gettysburg:

We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

This statement is just as true today as it was nearly 150 years ago, as I am certain that the impact of Michael's actions will live on far longer than any record of these words.

It is my sad duty to enter the name of Michael A. Bechert in the RECORD of the U.S. Senate for his service to this country and for his profound commitment to freedom, democracy and peace. When I think about this just cause in which we are engaged, and the unfortunate pain that comes with the loss of our heroes, I hope that families like Michael's can find comfort in the words of the prophet Isaiah who said, “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.”

May God grant strength and peace to those who mourn, and may God be with all of you, as I know He is with Michael.

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS DAVID A. WILKEY, JR.

Mr. President, I also rise today with a heavy heart and deep sense of gratitude to honor the life of the brave private first class from Indiana, David Wilkey, 22 years old, died on June 18th, 2007, from injuries sustained on June 17th, in Baghdad, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his dismounted patrol. With an optimistic future before him, David risked everything to fight for the values Americans hold close to our hearts, in a land halfway around the world.

Although David was extremely proud of his military service, he prided himself most on his family. He was a devoted husband to Melinda and loving father of 4-year-old stepson Christian Clark and 1-year-old son Blayke. They also have another child due in October. David's love for his family drove him to enlist, in order to continue his support of them. David is also survived by his mother Cindy, his father David Sr., stepmother Margaret, as well as two sisters and a brother.

David was on his first deployment in Iraq and had been there since February 2007. Assigned to D Company, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, Kansas, he was killed while serving his country in Operation Iraqi Freedom. “He had a big heart, and he's a son that any father could be proud of,” David Sr. said.

Today, I join David's family and friends in mourning his death. While we struggle to bear our sorrow over this loss, we can also take pride in the example he set, bravely fighting to make the world a safer place. It is his courage and strength of character that people will remember when they think of David, a memory that will burn