

Those who have so eloquently written and spoken knew the Senator much better than I—Presidents, Senators, world leaders, dignitaries, as well as members of his family and friends in West Virginia.

He will be remembered as an intelligent, compassionate and illustrious figure. A giant.

Many people have recalled his historic milestones, distinguished career and legendary speeches. I first met Senator Byrd when I arrived in the Senate in 2007. I introduced myself and told him about a friend and patient of mine from Wyoming who had told me that Robert Byrd was his favorite senator. Like Senator Byrd, my friend uses a wheelchair. Senator Byrd asked me why my friend liked him so much. I told him it was because of their mutual commitment to the Constitution.

I went on to say that he thought Senator Byrd was “the best thing since sliced bread.” Senator Byrd’s eyes brightened and widened with the reference to sliced bread. He then gave me a complete history of sliced bread in America and the date when the first mechanical bread slicer was used in the United States. As a true man of the people, Senator Byrd also sent a note and a copy of the Constitution to my friend in Wyoming.

When former Wyoming Senator Cliff Hanson died late last year, I shared the news with Senator Byrd. Senator Byrd said, “I liked Cliff Hansen. Cliff Hansen was a friend of mine. Cliff Hansen knew what he stood for.” The same can be said for Senator Byrd.

As a public servant, he had few equals. As a parliamentary expert, he had none. Every day, Senator Byrd showed his enduring dedication to his family, the people of West Virginia, the United States Constitution, and our Nation.

Senator Byrd leaves us with a memory of the man—the memory of his kindness, grace, and passion. He had a depth of institutional understanding and knowledge of the traditions of the U.S. Senate that will never be replaced. While many of us are students of history, Senator Byrd truly lived this Nation’s history. His strength, determination, and unyielding pursuit of knowledge serve as a model for all of us.

To his daughters Mona Byrd Fatemi and Marjorie Byrd Moore, his grandchildren, and family, I extend my family’s sympathy and hope the coming days are filled with love, enduring strength, and God’s grace.

Bobbi and I wish the Byrd family our best and our prayers are with you.

KYRGYZSTAN

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, in the last few weeks, great turmoil has unfolded in Kyrgyzstan. According to media reports, ethnic riots in the southern cities of Osh and Jalalabad have left up to 2,000 dead—309 confirmed by the Kyrgyz Government—thousands have been injured, and ap-

proximately 400,000 Uzbeks have been displaced.

I am deeply concerned about ethnic clashes and ongoing tension between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, especially given reports that international observers have noted they are reminiscent of the tragedies in Bosnia and Rwanda in the 1990s. Today, the situation appears to have stabilized, but we cannot discount the potential for renewed conflict after an apparent lull, which happened in both Bosnia and Rwanda.

We must also not forget that what happens in Kyrgyzstan has implications for U.S. interests throughout central Asia. As the Senate noted in Resolution 566, which passed unanimously on June 25, the events of the past month could spark unrest across the Ferghana Valley, which borders Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Kyrgyzstan also plays host to a U.S. air base at Manas International Airport that serves as a critical supply line for NATO and U.S.-led operations in Afghanistan.

For these reasons, I rise today to urge the provisional government and all citizens of Kyrgyzstan to move ahead with the process of reconciliation. I would also like to commend the Obama administration and others in the international community—particularly the United Nations and Russia—who have rendered fiscal and humanitarian aid to the Government of Kyrgyzstan during this difficult time. The international community must call on all parties to refrain from violence, cease persecution of minorities, and explore peaceful routes to conflict resolution.

There is other news out of Kyrgyzstan worth noting—namely, the referendum held on June 27 in support of a constitution that will establish central Asia’s first parliamentary democracy. This referendum was peaceful and inclusive, and I commend the provisional government for organizing this process. The referendum marked a historic opportunity to usher in a new period of democracy and stability in Kyrgyzstan, and the stakes are high. This is why I would like to highlight three areas where I hope there can be additional progress can be made.

Perhaps most importantly, there must be a credible investigation into the recent violence. One of the most important actions to take is to establish an investigative team that is viewed as credible by all sides. This investigation must ensure the perpetrators of violence are held accountable for their actions and initiate a process whereby all citizens, including ethnic Uzbeks, see themselves as sufficiently represented in the country’s national institutions.

The interim government must also ensure a smooth transition to the new Constitution. This means that the Kyrgyz authorities should redouble efforts to prevent the escalation of violence, and observers must monitor the

elections. The first transition of power is critical to the success of this democratic transition because it will set the baseline for all future elections. The people of Kyrgyzstan have shown overwhelmingly that they want democracy, and now the provisional government should do everything in its power to make those aspirations a reality.

Finally, the government must promote freedom of the press. According to Freedom House, in 2010, Kyrgyzstan was ranked 159th of 192 countries. At this critical juncture, the interim government may feel tempted to muzzle criticism to avoid giving fodder to dissidents. But to do so would undermine its credibility far more than any words published in a free press. There is an undeniable connection between a population’s confidence in their political system and the capacity of that system to ensure the free flow of information through an independent media. If the interim government and its successor want to identify the failures of previous governments in Kyrgyzstan, they need look no further than its abysmal record in the area of press freedom. To make the new constitution in Kyrgyzstan a success, the nation needs a truly independent media.

Mr. President, we are at an important turning point in Kyrgyzstan, where there is a glimmer of hope about democracy taking root in the future. At the same time, the potential for renewed unrest, rampant corruption, and curtailed freedoms could easily jeopardize recent progress. It is incumbent on all sides to act responsibly and to ensure there is not a resurgence of violence, so that the new Government of Kyrgyzstan can set an example of successful democracy for the region.

SMALL BUSINESS LENDING

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise to speak of an amendment, cosponsored by Senators GRASSLEY, ENZI, ISAKSON, and COLLINS, which has proven small business job creating power.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that it remains difficult for small businesses to access credit. We have all heard the justifiable frustration and outrage expressed by entrepreneurs nationwide in response to the albatross of tight credit which has a chokehold on our economy. And frankly, who could blame them, when just this past April, the Federal Reserve’s Senior Loan Officer Opinion Survey found the percentage of banks easing credit terms for small businesses was just a meager 1.9 percent—after it was an astonishing zero percent in both the past January and October surveys! Is this any way to jumpstart an anemic economy?

As ranking member of the Senate Small Business Committee I, along with Chair LANDRIEU, have vigorously championed measures to ease credit and increase small business lending. Together, we fought to include in the