

Committee and one of the first freshman members of the Senate on the Appropriations Committee. With Senator BYRD as the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee and I as a member, we have been working together ever since to build coalitions to get things done.

Senator BYRD's home State of West Virginia is right next door to Maryland. We share a common border—with Allegheny, Garret, and parts of Washington Counties just across the State line in Western Maryland. But we share more than a common border. We share a common set of values—rooted in faith, family commitment and patriotism.

Senator BYRD is no stranger to breaking records. He has done this before. He has already cast more votes and held more leadership positions—including serving as minority leader for 6 years and serving two stints as President pro tempore—than any other U.S. Senator in history. Today's record is further evidence of Senator BYRD's unwavering dedication to his State. When asked about this accomplishment, Senator BYRD told the press: "Records are fine. But what's important is what I do for the people of West Virginia. They are the ones who sent me here 48 years ago." It is this dedication that keeps the people of West Virginia voting for Senator BYRD. I like to say that I am the "Senator from Maryland and for Maryland," and it is this kind of shared value that makes me feel so close to Senator BYRD.

So today—June 12, 2006—we congratulate Senator ROBERT C. BYRD for his historic contributions to his State and to our Nation.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I rise today to honor a longtime friend and colleague, the esteemed senior Senator from West Virginia, Senator ROBERT BYRD. This is a historic day in his career and a historic day in the history of the Senate. Today Senator BYRD adds to his many accomplishments and honors the distinction of becoming the longest-serving Member in Senate history.

Senator BYRD's years of service to this country are an inspiration to all of us. His lifelong devotion to the institution of the Senate sets an example that we can only try to emulate. For almost half a century, he has been a tireless advocate for the people of West Virginia and the Nation. He believes that government can improve the lives of the citizens that it serves, and that we can all be advocates for justice. We are better Senators and better citizens when we attempt to live up to the legacy that he has established.

I first worked with Senator BYRD during the early days of my husband's administration. At the time, he had already served in the Senate for 34 years. I remember him being stately and silver-haired when we met. He was al-

ready the unofficial historian of the Senate, famous for standing in the well of the Chamber and dazzling his colleagues with quotations from the classics. I also learned then that he was a strict disciplinarian when it came to procedural rules and decorum, a quality that he retains to this day.

It is his devotion to the institution of the Senate that has made him a mentor to so many of us, and I am honored to include myself among the ranks of those who he has counseled.

When I was elected to the Senate, it took me only a minute to conclude that I should start my preparation by going to see the great sage and historian of the Senate, Senator BYRD.

To this day I still very fondly remember the visit that I paid to Senator BYRD's office in the Capitol in late November of 2000. I will be forever indebted to him for the guidance that he provided when I first came to the Senate.

Of course, I am not the only recipient of his kind advice and guidance. In fact, Senator BYRD has codified his vast knowledge of the history of the Senate into a multi-volume book. The four volumes published in 1989, 1991, 1993 and finally in 1995 were a labor of love for Senator BYRD. They will continue to be a resource and a treasure for many generations to come.

And let me tell you what Senator ROBERT BYRD did for the people of New York in the aftermath of the attack on lower Manhattan in 2001.

After that terrible day, the White House sent up a supplemental spending bill to finance the war, and there was not a single penny in it for New York. I told the President of the United States in the Oval Office that we were going to need at least \$20 billion to rebuild Ground Zero.

And thanks to the leadership and dedication of Senator BYRD, who chaired the Appropriations Committee at that time, we got that funding for New York. Thanks to his commitment, our firefighters, police officers, first responders, and volunteers who came to the rescue that day will have some help as they continue to cope with the health effects of exposure to the site.

Because of Senator BYRD's efforts, where once a pile of rubble stood, one day a tower will stand.

Because of Senator BYRD, our businesses and homeowners who lost everything are on the road to recovery.

As Senator BYRD has himself said, New York gained a third Senator on that day, and we are unquestionably better off for it.

ROBERT BYRD was born in North Wilkesboro, NC, and raised in West Virginia by his aunt and uncle. He is an avid fiddler, steeped in the rich musical traditions of the Appalachian folk life. He grew up in the coal mining community that he proudly defends today. As a member of the HELP Com-

mittee, I continue to be impressed by his vigilance on behalf of the coal miners of West Virginia and elsewhere in the Nation.

He was first elected to this Senate in 1958. He became a member of the Senate leadership in 1967, when he was selected to be secretary of the Democratic Conference. He was chosen to be Senate Democratic whip in 1971 and Democratic leader in 1977. He has held more leadership positions in the Senate than any other Member in Senate history.

Through all of his years of Senate service, there was one person who was always by his side, as his partner, friend, and as he said on many occasions, his teacher.

Erma Ora James was born in Floyd County, VA, and moved from there to the coal mines of West Virginia with her family. It was there that she met ROBERT BYRD at Mark Twain High School over 70 years ago. He first tried to woo her with gifts of bubble gum that he took from a classmate and stored up for her. And apparently it worked, because they became high school sweethearts and were married on May 29, 1937. Over the years, their family grew to include two daughters, six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

It is a tradition of Senator BYRD's to go to the floor of the Senate each Mother's Day and pay tribute to the Nation's mothers. When he does that he has often mentioned Erma and the joy that they shared together for so many years.

They had been married nearly 69 years when she passed away 3 months ago on March 15, 2006, after a long illness. Theirs has been called one of the great American love stories.

On his 63rd wedding anniversary he went to the Senate floor and said of her, "I have to frankly say that what little I have amounted, if it is anything much, I owe for the most part to [Erma.]" I know that today, as his colleagues who respect and admire him so very much come to the floor to praise his service in the Senate, Erma is looking down on us as well.

It is truly an honor to serve in the Senate with Senator BYRD. I wish him all the best on this day and I look forward to continuing our work together on behalf of the American people.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOND). Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 3 o'clock having arrived, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of S. 2766, which the clerk will report.