

Foreword

President pro tempore Robert C. Byrd’s reverence for the constitutional prerogatives, time-tested procedures, and unifying traditions of the United States Senate prompted the creation of this book. The 86th president pro tempore to serve since 1789 and the only modern-era occupant of that post to serve four non-consecutive terms, Senator Byrd has for many years studied the office’s origins and development with his characteristic thoroughness. In May 1980, as Senate majority leader, he addressed the topic in two carefully crafted Senate floor speeches. Nine years later, in his first term as president pro tempore, Senator Byrd expanded his earlier remarks. This extended essay appeared in the second volume of his encyclopedic *The Senate, 1789–1989*. There, he concluded, “The election of a senator to the office of president pro tempore has always been considered one of the highest honors offered to a senator by the Senate as a body. That honor has been bestowed upon a colorful and

significant group of senators during the past two centuries—men who stamped their imprint on the office and on their times.” It is therefore most fitting that this book be inaugurated during the tenure of Senator Robert C. Byrd—the longest-serving senator in our nation’s history.

This volume owes its existence to the expertise of the following members of the Senate Historical Office: Richard A. Baker, Mary Baumann, Beth Hahn, Betty K. Koed, Heather Moore, and Donald A. Ritchie. Dr. Koed prepared the essay surveying the development of the president pro tempore’s office to 1890, and Dr. Ritchie brought the story from 1890 to our own times.

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