



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Making High-Tech Medical Care Affordable

As we begin the new millennium, I marvel at the scientific advances in health care that make treating disease far easier than was the case when I was a boy. Today, West Virginians benefit from many advanced medical technologies, including one that allows doctors to make life-saving diagnoses without having to perform surgeries. Based at West Virginia University's Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences Center, the Positron Emission Tomography (PET) center allows doctors to analyze a patient and detect diseases without costly and painful invasive surgeries.

PET scanning is an imaging procedure that creates a three-dimensional image of a living organ such as a heart, a lung, or a patient's brain. The image provides physicians with a working model from which to make a diagnosis. This technology can be a powerful weapon in the battle against cancer, heart disease, and neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's disease and epilepsy. However, because of the high cost of this cutting-edge procedure, many patients are not able to take advantage of its benefits.

Until now, Medicare paid for PET scanning in only six different medical diagnoses. As a result, thousands of Americans have been shut out of advanced treatment and diagnosis. That is why I recently wrote to Donna

Shalala, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in an effort to expand Medicare coverage of PET technology. Along with a number of other Senators, I urged the Secretary to allow Medicare to pay for various PET procedures. I am pleased to report that Secretary Shalala has agreed to expand Medicare payments for PET to include a number of deadly cancers that can be detected at much earlier stages with this technology than is possible through more traditional techniques. Since early detection is the key to patients' survival in many illnesses, PET possesses tremendous life-saving potential. I also hope that the new Administration will consider an even broader expansion of Medicare payments for PET procedures.

Throughout my career of public service, I have strived to ensure accessible and affordable medical care for West Virginians. From the provision of funding for rural clinics and the support home health programs, to the launching of screening, testing, and research initiatives, I have tried to help meet the medical needs of West Virginians, many of whom live in rural areas without access to a nearby hospital. Expanding Medicare coverage of PET scanning is yet another means to improve the accessibility of state-of-the-art health care to patients in West Virginia and across the nation.

January 3, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Cutting Red Tape for Black Lung Victims

Growing up in the Southern West Virginia coalfields, I saw the debilitating effects of occupational pneumoconiosis, better known as black lung disease. It is an illness that is caused by the inhaling of coal dust by miners on a long-term basis. The coal dust sits in the lungs, reducing a miner's capacity to process oxygen, and causes such significant breathing problems that death often follows. Even though there has been meaningful progress in the prevention and treatment of black lung, the disease still claims an estimated 1,500 lives annually.

In 1969, in an effort to provide some relief to miners, I urged Congress to create a fund that would pay benefits to those miners who had contracted black lung and to their families. Congress agreed with me, and approved the benefits program. But, in recent years, the law has not worked as originally intended. Because of various rules changes, it has become increasingly difficult for miners to prove their black lung disability.

When a miner with the disease sought to receive black lung benefits, that miner often had to follow a long claims procedure. Frequently, the miner was overwhelmed by the number of medical opinions from "outside experts" that a coal company could engage

against the claim. Lacking the financial resources to counter such opinions, black lung victims often were forced to forfeit their legitimate benefit claims. In fact, since 1981, the extensive litigation that miners have had to face in order to prove their claims has been extremely cumbersome.

Fortunately, new regulations will provide miners with some support. These new rules allow the miner and the coal company to submit only two pieces of evidence each unless a judge determines otherwise. These regulations also give greater weight to the medical opinion of the miner's attending physician than to the opinions of outside experts. Thus, the new rules should create a more balanced process for the proof of disability by miners with black lung in order to win their claims.

These new regulations represent a real victory for black lung victims as they seek the benefits to which they may be entitled. Those individuals who have paid the price of their health to dig the coal that powers our economy must be protected and compensated for their sacrifice. Black lung victims should not be forced to worry from month to month, from appeal to appeal, as to whether they are going to be determined eligible to receive benefits. Our nation's coal miners simply deserve better.

January 10, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

New Session, New Challenges

At the recent start of the new session of Congress, I took the Oath of Office to uphold the Constitution and to serve in the U.S. Senate for the eighth time. I am truly honored that the people of West Virginia have shown their faith in me once again, and I am committed to working hard so that they will always feel that their faith was well placed.

In this session, the Senate, for the first time since 1881, is evenly split. This split has brought with it an opportunity to forge a renewed spirit of cooperation. Toward that end, leaders from both parties have crafted an unprecedented agreement to work together, and I hope that their agreement will bear fruit. When I first came to the Senate in 1959, Lyndon Johnson was the Majority Leader. At that time, politics did not so overwhelmingly prevail over statesmanship. Leader Johnson worked with President Eisenhower, a Republican, in the best interests of the nation.

I hope that Members of the 107th Congress, and especially the Senate, will learn from past examples of cooperation. With 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans, the Senate has the opportunity to show that it can rise above the interests of party and accomplish something worthy of remem-

brance in the pages of history.

There are many issues that will come before the Senate this session, including discussions over taxes, Medicare, and Social Security. We will likely debate ways to improve access to health care and how to extend Medicare coverage to include prescription drugs. While there will certainly be differences between the parties on these issues, I hope that those differences will not result in extreme divisiveness. What is important to remember is that there is more on which we agree than on which we disagree. Whether it is increasing the minimum wage, improving classroom standards, or strengthening our nation's infrastructure, Senators should be able to find common ground on critical areas. If we fail to do so and put partisan agendas ahead of the people's interests, the nation will suffer.

I look forward to serving my eighth term in the U.S. Senate. There are many challenges ahead, both for the nation and for West Virginia. I will do all that I can, especially through my work on the Appropriations Committee, to meet those challenges and to help create a future with new opportunities for our children and grandchildren.

January 17, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Striving for a Balance

For years, I have been committed to finding a middle ground between environmental protection and economic security. When the Senate voted on amendments to the Clean Air Act in 1990, I pressed for compensation for miners who would lose their jobs due to the stringent provisions of that Act. When the Clinton Administration advocated the Kyoto Protocol to reduce global warming, I won Senate approval of a resolution that would help to ensure that the United States would not be placed at an economic disadvantage when compared with developing nations. Throughout these efforts and many others, I have worked to balance necessary environmental protections with the equally important economic needs in West Virginia and throughout the nation.

President Bush has said that he recognizes the challenges facing West Virginia. That is why I felt it was important to meet recently with two members of his Cabinet to discuss my efforts to balance the environment and the economy.

Incoming Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Christine Todd Whitman seemed to understand the challenge in striking that balance. As governor of New Jersey, she has dealt with similar circumstances. In our meeting, I explained to her that many people in West Vir-

ginia believe there is a bias against our state at the EPA because of our coal mining. Based on that meeting, I think that Christine Todd Whitman will be an EPA Administrator who listens and responds to our concerns.

Similarly, new Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham has agreed with me that coal is integral to any national energy strategy. When I met with him, we discussed clean coal technologies and other research that can utilize many of our fossil fuel resources without damaging the quality of our air. Since 1985, when I established the Clean Coal Technology initiative with a Congressional authorization of \$750 million, more than \$2.4 billion has been invested in this successful program. Secretary Abraham voiced Administration support for these efforts. By utilizing our nation's knowledge and resources, we can meet our energy demands while also improving air quality.

In the coming months, there certainly will be debate over how best to protect the environment without risking the economic security of communities across the country. Adopting a commonsense national energy policy that takes advantage of our advanced technologies while also utilizing our vast coal reserves can be a win-win situation for the environment and the economy.

January 24, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Marshall University: On the Cutting-Edge

Across America and around the world, science is opening new doors in medicine and exploration. In West Virginia, we are lucky to be home to several cutting-edge research facilities and universities, including Marshall University in Huntington and West Virginia University in Morgantown. These schools are setting a standard of excellence in the preparation of our young people for the challenges that they face in this new century.

For several years, Marshall University has been committed to the expansion of research and educational facilities. For example, the medical school, which opened in 1977, has attracted a dramatic increase in admissions requests and has raised the stature of the university. The John Deaver Drinko Library, constructed with the help of \$5 million that I added to an appropriations bill in 1995, provides students with a state-of-the-art learning resource.

Today, planning is underway for a new campus facility that once again will raise the standards for excellence at Marshall. The Biomedical and Science Center will provide students and faculty members with expanded scientific opportunities in a variety of fields including anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, microbiology, pharmacology, genetics, and immunology. These are some of the most demanding -- and most

promising -- areas of scientific research.

Additionally, this new center could be a significant boon to Southern West Virginia. Already in Cabell County, private companies are involved in the biotechnology industry. By specializing in related fields, Marshall can help to cultivate an exciting new industry for the Mountain State. While our industrial base for decades has relied on physical strength to mine coal and forge steel, our economy will rely more heavily on mental strength in the years to come. With this new investment, Marshall University will take a great step forward in training young people so that they can excel in a job force driven by technological know-how.

I contributed to the effort to construct the Biomedical and Science Center by adding \$25 million to an appropriations bill late last year, thus moving the center much closer to reality. With a final price tag estimated at \$36 million, university officials hope to begin construction next year.

Marshall University has a long-held devotion to service and an academic record of which to be proud. Today, the university is focused on the future, rededicating itself to high-quality education and technological sophistication. The drive to build and equip this state-of-the-art Biomedical and Science Center reflects Marshall's commitment to excellence in education.

January 31, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Meeting the Needs of Autistic Children

Autism is a little talked about, but surprisingly prevalent, illness affecting hundreds of children in West Virginia. This neurological disorder is recognizable through abnormalities in communication and social development generally during a child's first three years. Autism affects one in every 500 children and is the third most common childhood developmental disability. As these autistic children grow up, some are relatively high-functioning, with speech and intelligence intact. Others may suffer from mental disabilities, are mute, or have serious language complications. For some, autism makes them seem closed off from the world around them. That is why autism is such a frustrating affliction not only for the sufferer but also for the sufferer's family and friends.

In the Mountain State, we are fortunate to have an outstanding resource available for children and families who are dealing with autism. The West Virginia Autism Training Center, based at Marshall University, works to meet the needs of autistic children and their families. Since it opened in 1983, the Center's staff has worked with families in 53 of West Virginia's 55 counties. Through commitment, hard work, and creativity, the staff helps to train the people involved with the

autistic child so that the child can lead a happy, productive life.

For six years, I have assisted the Autism Training Center by adding funds to appropriations bills so that more resources can be devoted to the needs of autistic children. Most recently, in an appropriations bill late last year, I added \$313,000 -- for a total of \$1 million in the legislation -- for the Center. The money will be used to hire additional staff members and to provide more families with support programs. Currently, a ten-person staff works to meet the needs of the 600 West Virginia families with an autistic child. By expanding its staff, the Center will be able to provide an improved service to those in need.

Today, more than ever before, children with autism can be helped. Special education programs -- like those designed and implemented by the staff at the West Virginia Autism Training Center -- can expand the capacity of autistic children to learn, to communicate, and to relate with others while also reducing the severity of disruptive behaviors. By pairing these efforts with the medical research into autism at the National Institutes of Health, we can better understand the causes of the disease, how to treat it effectively, and, someday, how to prevent it.

February 7, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Truth about Tax Cuts

In Washington, lawmakers are rushing to embrace a proposed ten-year tax cut proposed by President Bush. The President's plan, appealing though it may be, is based on predicted surpluses of \$2.7 trillion over the next decade, excluding the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds. The numbers sound impressive, but the problem with budget predictions is that they are about as reliable as winter weather predictions -- reality rarely matches the forecast.

The Bush tax cut, when properly measured, is estimated to cost \$2.1 trillion, rather than the \$1.6-trillion figure regularly cited by the Administration. The \$2.1-trillion figure takes into account both the extra federal interest costs generated by the tax cut and other associated costs. And if the tax cut is made retroactive, as some suggest, the cost could reach as high as \$2.5 trillion.

That is the dilemma Congress faces. Do we harness a massive tax cut to uncertain budget forecasts or must we exercise fiscal caution until we have a better understanding of how the economic predictions will play out? If we pass a huge tax cut and the surpluses evaporate, how will we pay for imperatives such as education or Social Security or a Medicare fix or a prescription drug plan?

These concerns are not mere theoretical musings. Currently, 44.8-million Americans receive Social Security. That number is projected to grow to 82.7 million in 2030, yet the Social Security Trust Fund is expected to be exhausted in 2037. The Medicare Trust Fund is projected to run out of money in 2023. Since 1990, national spending on prescription drugs has tripled, yet Medicare does not provide a prescription drug benefit. How do we fund these needs if we have emptied the kitty with the huge Bush tax cut?

Finally, there is the matter of debt reduction. The nation is on the right course. We are paying down the public debt. But reversing course at this point would pass the burden of our national debt onto our children and grandchildren.

Tax cuts are appealing to everyone. Indeed, I support a moderate tax cut that would help to boost the economy and some specific tax cuts like the elimination of the marriage penalty. But, given our nation's needs and the uncertainty of the budget projections, we must proceed with caution when considering a massive tax cut. Congress ought to impose a reality check and turn the wishful thinking of the President into wise policy for the people.

February 14, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Your Stake in the Health Care Debate

This session, Congress is positioned to make decisions that would affect the ability of West Virginians to gain access to more affordable, more reliable health care. From debate on the federal budget to negotiations over strengthening patient protections, health care will be a front-and-center issue in many Congressional deliberations this year.

One of the major debates will center on the proposed "Patient's Bill of Rights." This legislation, which I am cosponsoring in the Senate, would address many of the health care concerns for the 160 million Americans enrolled in a managed care plan. At the core of this legislation is the basic tenet that medical decisions should be made by the patient in consultation with the doctor, and not by an accountant at the managed care company. In too many cases, however, the managed care industry's priority has become higher profits and not better health care. The Patient's Bill of Rights would protect the traditional doctor-patient relationship and ensure that treatment decisions are based on a medical diagnosis and not on an insurance company's profit sheets.

Additionally, the Patient's Bill of Rights would allow a person in an emergency medical situa-

tion to seek immediate care from the nearest hospital without receiving prior approval from the managed care company. In an emergency, when every minute is critical, a person should not have to waste precious time waiting for permission from the managed care provider.

Finally, the legislation would ensure that patients who are denied care by an insurance company can appeal the decision to an independent reviewer and receive expedited decisions that are binding on the managed care plan. It would guarantee that HMOs are held accountable in court if their decisions harm patients.

This legislation has wide support in both the House and Senate and also is endorsed by more than 200 different organizations, including the American Medical Association and the American Nurses Association. In fact, most of these provisions have been endorsed by the managed care industry's own trade association as voluntary standards that its members should follow. Since responsible plans already provide these protections to their members as a matter of course, I believe all managed care providers should be required to live up to these basic standards.

February 21, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Defense Starts at Home

There has been much talk in Washington about the need to increase defense spending, but little frank discussion of the role that our Armed Services will play in the new millennium. One mission that must be addressed is our nation's ability to defend against attacks from hostile states or terrorists using chemical or biological weapons of mass destruction.

Defense experts have found that our country is vulnerable to this type of danger. Due to the accessibility of high-tech equipment, there is an increasing likelihood that these weapons could be used against our citizens here at home. Law enforcement agencies work to stop would-be terrorists before they can implement their nefarious plans, but we also must be prepared to respond more quickly and effectively to the consequences of a successful attack.

I recently contacted President Bush about the need to implement a comprehensive homeland defense plan. One key to this plan must be to provide the right training and equipment for state and local authorities to respond to such emergencies. The other key to homeland defense is our National Guard. Our citizen-soldiers are experienced in responding to natural disasters. Many have the specialized knowledge that can be used to assess dangerous situations and to coordinate

the mobilization of the federal government's resources.

With this in mind, I have added appropriations for a number of counterterrorism initiatives that the National Guard is spearheading in West Virginia. These include \$5 million for the Memorial Tunnel National Counter-Terrorism Facility in Kanawha County which will help to train emergency responders in dealing with chemical or biological attacks; \$22.5 million for the Eastern Regional Training Center at Camp Dawson, Preston County, to provide the military with unique training to respond to a variety of scenarios; and the initial \$1 million for the Virtual Medical Campus at West Virginia University which will train emergency responders to identify the toxins used in attacks and to take steps to prevent significant loss of life.

With these initiatives and the other West Virginia National Guard facilities under development, our state can serve as a model for homeland defense efforts. The next steps are to make sure that our National Guard is ready to take on this mission and that our state and local officials know where to turn in the event of an attack. Taking action on these points now will help to assure the long-term security and safety of our citizens as we move forward in the new millennium.



Byrd's-Eye View

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The Bush Back-Door Tax Hike

Over the next few weeks, there will be much debate over the Bush Administration's proposed \$1.6 trillion tax cut. But before joining in the rush to support the Bush plan, it would be well to examine the details of the proposal.

The most commonly held argument in support of the across-the-board tax cut is that it will benefit all Americans. But what we are not told is how a small minority of taxpayers will benefit greatly while the majority of taxpayers will see little benefit. According to an analysis by the accounting firm Deloitte & Touche, a millionaire would save \$47,000 annually in taxes under the Bush plan, while a worker making \$20,000 would save, on average, \$300 a year. In essence, a millionaire could pay the tuition bill for 34 semesters of education at West Virginia University, while the person with the more modest tax break could afford a student's books for a single semester. Congress ought not approve a tax cut that is so weighted against middle- and low-income families.

Additionally, those who have been quick to embrace this tax cut ignore the lessons of the not-too-distant past. In 1981, President Reagan proposed a tax cut based on projected budget surpluses. We heard that the Reagan tax cut -- which

I reluctantly supported -- would help to strengthen the economy. But the results of that tax cut were quite different. Instead of a stronger economy and projected surpluses, the Reagan tax cut resulted in massive deficits, higher unemployment, and increased interest rates. What the average taxpayer saved in reduced federal income taxes was spent several times over in higher interest costs on home mortgages, car loans, and credit cards.

I recognize the attraction of tax cuts. On the surface, reducing taxes seems a very easy thing to do, and there are tax cuts that Congress should approve. For example, I support some specific tax cuts like the elimination of the marriage penalty. But instead of buying into a massive tax cut, we ought to pay down the national debt, protect Social Security, and shore up the Medicare system. We ought to provide for a prescription drug benefit for Medicare recipients. And we should strengthen our nation's infrastructure needs, such as our roads, bridges, water and sewer systems, and airports. By addressing our nation's critical priorities and avoiding a return to the economic pitfalls of the 1980s, we can prove ourselves to be good stewards for our children and grandchildren.

March 7, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Call to Save Lives

The recent shooting at Santana High School in California forces us again to confront the issue of violence in schools. While it is easy to assign blame for the problem of school violence, pointing fingers does little to prevent future tragedies. Instead, it is important to learn from these events and to act to prevent them.

The U.S. Secret Service recently concluded a study of school shootings in an effort to find ways to stop these disasters before they happen. Analyzing 37 school shootings from the last 26 years, a noteworthy similarity was found. In almost three-quarters of all the incidents studied, the assailant told someone of his or her plan before carrying out the shooting. It would appear, therefore, that many school shootings could be prevented if only those with advance knowledge of the possible violence would share this information with a parent, teacher, or school administrator -- someone equipped to prevent the act.

West Virginia is one of several states with a toll-free school safety hotline. The hotline, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, is

designed to alert authorities of any planned violence in a school. Anonymous calls to the hotline are forwarded to local authorities and investigated within one school day. Threats cannot be taken lightly. When they are made, they need to be investigated. If evidence of potential violence is found, the authorities need to act.

In the days since the tragedy at Santana High School, students across the country have found the courage to tell authorities of potentially dangerous situations in their own schools. That is a good step toward ending this violence. Parents should teach their children that calling the hotline is not tattling on someone; rather, it may be saving someone's life.

The hotline is not a cure-all for safety problems in our schools, but it can be an important resource for preventing violence. Just as terror crept into the small community of Santee, California, it can easily creep into West Virginia communities. Call the West Virginia School Safety Hotline at (800) 418-6423, extension 359, to report any threatening situation that may endanger a school.

March 14, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Soaring Cost of Medicines

The high cost of prescription drugs has been a primary concern for many West Virginians, especially for those living on fixed incomes who rely on Medicare for their health care coverage. This problem was recently highlighted in a study by the federal Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA).

The organization reported that, for the general population, prescription drug expenses will continue to rise at a faster rate than any other category of health care services over the next decade. HCFA predicts that drug costs will grow at an average rate of 12.6 percent a year through 2010. For those over age 65, the agency estimates that the average yearly bill will rise from \$1,989 per person next year to \$4,818 per person in 2011.

For West Virginia, which has the oldest per capita population in the country, this study is alarming. In our state, 335,000 people rely on Medicare for their health care coverage. Yet, even though most private insurance plans include a prescription drug benefit, Medicare does not.

I have cosponsored the Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage Act to help fix this deficiency in the Medicare program. The legislation would create a volun-

tary and universal prescription drug benefit. Importantly, for many West Virginians who live miles from the nearest health care facility, the Act would ensure access to medicines by providing bonus payments to rural pharmacies to ensure a rapid delivery of prescription drugs.

The costs associated with any Medicare prescription drug benefit necessitate a small premium for the voluntary program. But in the plan that I support, the premium would be affordable and based on a beneficiary's income. Additionally, to keep costs down, this new prescription drug benefit would give Medicare the ability to negotiate with drug manufacturers for lower prices. The resulting collective purchasing power would allow Medicare to receive the same drug price discounts that other large, private-sector insurance companies already possess.

Seniors should not have to choose between paying for medicine or paying for other necessities. The legislation that I am cosponsoring would provide an affordable remedy to that all-too-common scenario. Under a fortified Medicare program, elderly and disabled West Virginians could rest assured that their prescription drug needs would be met.

March 21, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Teachers: Uncle Sam Wants You

In West Virginia and throughout the nation, public schools face a teacher shortage that threatens to undermine an education system which is already overburdened by expanding enrollment and a crumbling infrastructure. In the next decade, two million teachers across the nation -- half of all the teachers in our schools today -- will retire. Coupled with a severe scarcity of teachers and principals in rural and urban schools and with the shortage of educators who focus on key subjects like math and science, it becomes apparent that action must be taken today to avert a crisis in our classrooms tomorrow.

Consequently, I have cosponsored the National Teacher and Principal Recruitment Act -- a measure that should help to meet these challenges head-on. The Act would create a national Teacher Corps and a national Principal Corps to attract qualified individuals to the education profession. The Teacher Corps would utilize \$500 million annually to fund scholarships and bonuses to recruit up to 75,000 new teachers to teach in high-need schools -- facilities that have a high percentage of students from families with incomes below the poverty line. Simi-

larly, the proposed Principal Corps would receive \$50 million annually to help recruit new principals for our nation's most disadvantaged schools.

To increase retention, both the Teacher Corps and the Principal Corps would provide mentoring and professional development to ensure that more educators remain in the classroom. The National Teacher and Principal Recruitment Act would also authorize a \$1 million annual public service campaign -- similar to the recruitment promotions utilized by the U.S. Armed Forces -- to inform interested individuals about the resources, incentives, and support available to those who wish to enter the education field.

A quality education is the foundation of our society. Dedicated educators are crucial to building that foundation. It is imperative to the future of West Virginia and the nation that we address the shortages of teachers and principals in areas where their skills are needed most. It is my hope that the National Teacher and Principal Recruitment Act would help to attract more individuals to the education profession so that all American children may receive the quality education that they deserve.

March 28, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Keeping the Commitment to Clean Coal

In 1985, I started the federal Clean Coal Technology initiative with an amendment authorizing \$750 million for the program. Since then, the initiative has expanded through a joint government-industry investment of more than \$6 billion. This investment has led to cutting-edge projects in 18 states, including an array of high-technology initiatives that can spearhead a new era of clean, efficient power plants fired by our nation's abundant coal resources.

During his presidential campaign, George W. Bush pledged \$2 billion for the clean coal technology effort over the next decade. After having to fight year after year to protect funding for clean coal technology, I welcomed Mr. Bush's commitment.

But in its recently released budget blueprint, the Bush Administration indicates that the President will carry through on his promise of \$2 billion for the clean coal technology effort at the expense of fossil fuel research programs – natural gas, oil, and other coal research. Because of this budgetary shell game, many of the promising fossil fuel research initiatives already in progress would be severely underfunded or eliminated. This budget strategy is akin to robbing Peter to pay Paul.

The President has stated that America is in the midst of an energy crisis. In

order to avoid future crises, we need a more diverse fuel resource base with domestically produced natural gas, oil, and coal as the foundation.

I have talked with the President about my concerns. I also recently met with Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham to voice my objections to reductions in fossil fuel energy research funding. The Administration talks about the need to increase the supply of domestically available fuels. Yet, how can we increase supply if we are going to cut back on the fossil fuel research that makes it possible to produce and more efficiently use more oil, more natural gas, and more coal? While I appreciate the budgetary increases for clean coal technology, it is shortsighted to pay for that technology by subtracting from other valuable fossil fuel initiatives already underway.

If this Administration walks away from fossil fuel energy research, it may well set our energy future on a course of rolling blackouts throughout the nation, and an increased reliance on foreign nations for the fuels needed to keep our economic engine running. Investment in both fossil fuel energy research and clean coal technology must be expanded if America is to be in a strong position to avoid energy crises in the future.

April 4, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Clean Water Should Not Be a Luxury

When I was growing up in Southern West Virginia in the 1920's, my family did not have running water in our home. Instead, I had to take a pail to the nearby pump to fetch water for the household. Today, 80 years later, in many parts of West Virginia and throughout rural America, the pattern that I followed as a young boy is still repeated. In many areas, clean, safe drinking water and an operational sewer system simply do not exist.

Earlier this year, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a new study on unmet drinking water needs across America. The agency reported that a total of \$48 billion is needed to address serious deficiencies in the water systems of rural communities of 10,000 or fewer residents. Of that total, \$33.5 billion has been identified as an immediate need. In 1997, the EPA released a similar report on rural wastewater that found nearly \$20 billion was needed to avoid serious threats to public health.

In order to confront this problem, I successfully offered an amendment to add \$1 billion in federal funding

to the Budget Resolution for the construction of clean drinking water and wastewater systems. In some cases, this will mean extending water and wastewater lines from one community to the next. In other cases, it will mean substantial construction projects that will, for the first time, provide many families with clean drinking water and sanitary wastewater systems.

In a nation as advanced as ours, where technology has moved us to places that once were only the stuff of science fiction, families should not have to worry about the safety of their water supply. In all parts of America, there are men, women, and children who live every day without the basic necessities of clean, safe, drinking water or sanitary wastewater disposal. Certain functions of government go straight to the fabric of the social contract. Those that help to provide all Americans with the basic necessities of life are paramount among them. We are in the 21st Century; it is high time to bring our water and sewer systems out of the 19th Century.

April 11, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Model of Community Health Care

Throughout my Congressional career, one of my priorities has been to expand West Virginians' access to health care. In many rural areas, the nearest doctor is miles and miles away. Moreover, specialized care too often is limited to bigger cities or available only out of state. That is why I have always worked to fund local, community-based health centers. While some specialized or surgical care is still limited, these community-based facilities provide an important health resource for rural West Virginians.

One such center recently received national recognition for its efforts. For the third consecutive year, the West Virginia School for Osteopathic Medicine (WVSOM) in Lewisburg has been ranked among the top 50 primary care medical schools in the nation, according to the magazine *U.S. News and World Report*. The school, which was created in 1972, rapidly became an important resource for West Virginia, as its graduates often went to work in the state's southern coalfields that, for too long, had been plagued by a distinct lack of medical professionals. Expanding primary medical care has always been a goal of the WVSOM. In fact, according to the magazine, in the last three years alone, 92 percent of the school's graduates have

entered the primary care fields of internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics/gynecology, or family practice.

In addition to its important role of training new physicians, the WVSOM is very involved in the medical treatment of Southern West Virginians. Through the Robert C. Byrd Clinic, the faculty of physicians provides medical care to residents of Greenbrier, Monroe, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Raleigh, Fayette, and Summers counties. I added \$4 million to an appropriations bill in 1995 to help fund the clinic's construction. Since the clinic opened, the number of patient visits has grown by an impressive 42 percent. But to handle the substantial demand for its services, the WVSOM needs even more space, which is why, last fall, I added another \$249,000 to a bill to help expand the clinic's ambulatory care unit.

Community health centers provide the kind of comprehensive, quality primary care services that are so urgently needed in underserved, rural areas. Facilities like the Robert C. Byrd Clinic at the West Virginia School for Osteopathic Medicine give qualified physicians the opportunity to serve people who need their help the most. I congratulate the school for its record of achievement, and look forward to its continued success in the future.

April 18, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Preventing Medical Mistakes

America has one of the most advanced health care systems in the world. Yet, despite the best intentions of medical professionals, studies have found that as many as 98,000 lives are lost annually in the U.S. due to mistakes made by health care providers. This ranks medical errors as one of the nation's leading causes of death. In addition, medical errors each year leave thousands of patients with permanent disabilities or unnecessary suffering. As a result of these errors, the nation incurs an estimated \$29 billion in lost income and disability and health care expenses.

While the most publicized medical errors occur in hospital settings, mistakes can occur throughout the health care system, in nursing homes, pharmacies, clinics -- even during home health care visits. While doctors and nurses are certainly trained to recognize and guard against mistakes, and while these professionals and the facilities in which they work take numerous precautions to prevent error, the practice of medicine, as the old adage goes, "is not an exact science." Caregivers and their patients are human, and humans make mistakes.

Of course that is not to

suggest that we cannot and should not reach for improvement -- especially when lives are at stake. For that reason, I supported the addition of \$50 million to an appropriations bill last fall to study the problem of medical errors. The funds will be used to collect data related to patient safety, to test practices aimed at reducing medical errors, and to determine ways to improve the training of health care providers. It is my hope that this research will result in practical solutions for a serious concern.

This initiative is an effort by government and the health care community, working together, to reduce mistakes. But patients, themselves, can play an important role in preventing medical errors. By becoming educated about medical conditions, medications and treatment options; by asking questions and insisting on answers; and by talking candidly with a doctor about any and all relevant medical history, a patient can help to ensure the quality of his or her care.

Good health is a precious commodity. The better we understand how medical mistakes are made and how to prevent them, the more we can ensure the good health of Americans.

April 25, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Coast Guard's West Virginia Success

West Virginia has no oceanfront property. Our state does not boast of scenic Atlantic sunrises or Pacific sunsets. Yet the Mountain State is home to a crucial facility that helps to ensure the safety of ships traveling around the globe.

The Coast Guard Operations Systems Center in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle is the computer nerve center for the United States' maritime rescue and environmental protection activities around the globe. In the 1980s, the Coast Guard had outgrown its original computer center in New York and started the search for a new, more advanced facility. Because of West Virginia's high-quality workforce and cutting-edge fiberoptic network, I saw that the Mountain State could be an excellent place for the Coast Guard's new facility. Working with Coast Guard officials, I secured \$4.7 million in federal appropriations bills to facilitate the establishment of the new Operations Systems Center in Martinsburg. Today, the Center has about 260 employees with an annual economic impact of approximately \$22 million.

In the decade since it opened, the Operations Systems Center has become the Coast Guard's primary computer and data networks center. It runs computer programs for search and rescue, marine safety, maritime law enforcement, military

personnel, logistics, and network security for the Coast Guard. If a ship issues a distress signal, Coast Guard officials can utilize the Operations Systems Center in West Virginia to find nearby merchant vessels that can assist in a rescue effort. Since 1990, this system is credited with saving over 2,000 lives. If a vessel is overdue in port, West Virginia Coast Guard staff can use another program to calculate the most likely position of the vessel, based on wind and ocean currents, dramatically increasing the chance of a quick rescue. This critical search-and-rescue information and support is available to Coast Guard units around the clock, every day of the year, from the Operations Systems Center.

I have endured more than my fair share of criticism for my efforts to meet national priorities with facilities in West Virginia. However, as the Coast Guard Operations Systems Center in Martinsburg exemplifies, these partnerships can be beneficial to everyone. In West Virginia, we can fulfill national needs while also providing important jobs for our state's citizens. I applaud the staff and contractors at the Coast Guard Operations Systems Center in the Eastern Panhandle and look forward to many more years of continued success.

May 2, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Putting a Cork in Teenage Drinking

As the school year draws to a close, thousands of young people throughout West Virginia will put on tuxedos and dresses, buy flowers, and nervously wait for the arrival of their dates to the high school prom. Soon thereafter, these same young men and women will mark the completion of their high school educations surrounded by friends and family at graduation ceremonies. These events can form memories that last forever. Too often, however, these events turn to tragedy as young people use alcohol to celebrate their milestones.

In an effort to avert future alcohol-related tragedies, I recently added an amendment to legislation that would set aside \$25 million for local school districts to promote alcohol prevention efforts in our nation's high schools. Of this amount, \$5 million would be targeted specifically toward low-income and rural school districts. Our nation has taken elaborate measures to combat drug use. We have tightened our border patrols, increased funding for both police and prosecutors, and even sent military advisors to Colombia to assist in the international war on drugs. But alcohol -- Americans' most favored drug -- is widely available and extensively promoted.

According to the National Institute on Alcohol

Abuse and Alcoholism, the extent of consumption of alcohol by children ages 9 to 15 is startling. Consider these facts: three million children ages 14 through 17 are regular drinkers; 24 percent of eighth graders have used alcohol in the last 30 days; and more than 100,000 twelve- to thirteen-year-olds binge drink every month. Additionally, ninth graders who drink are almost twice as likely to attempt suicide as are those who do not drink, and 40 percent of children who begin drinking before the age of 15 will become alcoholics at some point in their lives. These statistics make the case for mounting a national effort to combat underage drinking.

Local government agencies and community groups commendably have been battling the problem for sometime. But with limited resources, they are simply outgunned by the profitable alcohol industry. I hope that the \$25 million that I have set aside will help to enhance and expand local efforts aimed at the prevention of underage drinking. As the statistics show, too many promising lives are lost to alcohol at an early age. By providing these dollars to implement anti-drinking programs, we may truly fulfill the old adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

May 9, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Relief from Rising Prescription Drug Costs

A recent report by the National Institute for Health Care Management shows an alarming increase in the cost of prescription drugs. The Institute -- which is a non-profit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to improving the effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of America's health care system -- found that the price of prescription medicines jumped by 19 percent between 1999 and 2000. In fact, the group's analysis found that doctors last year issued 2.9 billion prescriptions totaling \$131.9 billion. Many of the medicines responsible for the price increase are those used to treat illnesses more common in an aging population, such as arthritis, diabetes, and high cholesterol.

This report bears out the need for a prescription drug benefit as part of the Medicare program. When Medicare was created in 1965, it was modeled after the private insurance plans of the time. Very few of those plans included a prescription drug benefit. But today, while most private insurance plans include a prescription drug plan, Medicare has not kept pace. As a result, Americans who rely on Medicare for their health care coverage, especially those living on fixed incomes, are seeing more of their family budget swallowed up by the rising cost of medicines.

In an effort to provide

Medicare recipients with some relief, I am cosponsoring legislation that would create a universal, voluntary prescription drug benefit in the Medicare program. The legislation would provide all Medicare beneficiaries with affordable coverage for drug costs. Those who choose to participate in the prescription drug initiative would be responsible for an affordable premium and a copayment for their medicines.

West Virginians can learn more about the proposed Medicare prescription drug benefit by visiting my Internet site at <http://byrd.senate.gov>. Recently, I unveiled a new section of my site that takes a closer look at the issue and provides detailed information about the legislation that I am cosponsoring.

As the report by the National Institute for Health Care Management points out, the cost of medicines will likely continue to increase at a pace well above inflation. As new drugs and treatments become available, it is important that they be affordable. The legislation that I am cosponsoring would help to open the doors to these new medicines for Medicare recipients in West Virginia and across the country. It would help to fortify Medicare, allowing elderly and disabled West Virginians to rest assured that their prescription drug needs would be met.

May 16, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Pride through Service

In schools throughout West Virginia and the nation, hundreds of children are expelled or suspended from class for disruptive, violent, and sometimes dangerous behavior. Too often, expelled or suspended students are then left to their own devices, without supervision or guidance, during the time that they are away from school. An amendment of mine that recently won Senate approval would begin to change that situation by encouraging states to create community service programs for suspended and expelled youths.

Specifically, my amendment to the education bill would provide \$50 million to encourage states to develop programs that put suspended and expelled students to work in community service activities. Whether picking up litter, whacking weeds, painting fences, or mowing the grass, public service programs would provide these young people with alternative activities that would help to better their communities and their lives.

It is said that idle hands are the devil's workshop. I think that we should put those hands to work. Too many students use suspension or expulsion as a means to avoid their classroom responsibilities. My amend-

ment would provide these youths with new duties. Instead of hanging around on street corners or roaming around the local shopping malls, these young people would be required to participate in community service activities that give them structure, promote a work ethic, and send the message that suspension from school is not a vacation.

These programs would also allow youths to give something back to their communities. Many young people of the "me" generation do not consider themselves members of society. They have no notion of social responsibility. By performing community service, these young people would make a contribution to their neighbors. This also might open their eyes to the problems of those around them.

I know that there is no magic wand to wave when it comes to instilling a sense of responsibility in children. If such a wand existed, teachers and parents would have used it years ago. But I hope that by encouraging community service for those who have erred in their ways, we can build a foundation of community spirit in these young people and, possibly for the first time, give them a sense of pride in themselves.

May 23, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Economic Assistance for West Virginia Communities

As the marketplace has changed and old industries have given way to new, West Virginia has been confronted with new challenges in economic development. To help meet those challenges in an innovative way, I have supported federal legislation to continue a targeted program of support for communities struggling to realize a new vision for the future. The Community Renewal Tax Relief Act authorizes more than \$25 billion over the next decade to ensure the continued success of a federal initiative that encourages economic development.

The act continues the Empowerment Zones or Enterprise Communities (EZ/EC) program, which provides EZ and EC designations to select localities. With such a designation, these areas get a leg up on obtaining special tax incentives, grants, and loans to make community improvements, enhance infrastructure, and expand business opportunities.

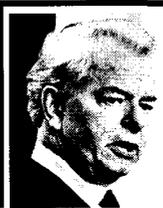
Since the program was first established in 1993, more than 146 communities throughout the United States have benefited from EZ and EC designations. In West Virginia, the City of Huntington, McDowell County, the City of Charleston, and the five-county region of Clay, Roane, Braxton, Nicholas, and Fayette, currently participate in the program. The Community Renewal Tax Relief Act calls for the establishment of nine new empowerment zones and 40 new renewal com-

munities nationally over the next ten years.

Once designated as an enterprise community or empowerment zone, a local area receives special advantages, including increased weight in competition for federal grants and loans as well as assistance in strategic planning and design. In some cases, these communities may also receive waivers from federal regulations that otherwise can make it difficult for cash-strapped towns to pursue development opportunities. The EZ/EC designation also helps to cut through federal agency red tape so local communities can more quickly solve their economic-development problems.

To qualify for one of these designations, localities must satisfy several requirements. Communities must partner with private or non-profit organizations or with state or local government entities. They must develop strategic plans for growth and revitalization and they must also act in concert with their partners and the federal program to bring those plans to fruition.

The EZ/EC initiative is an example of the kind of innovative thinking that is needed to help struggling towns and rural areas improve their economic fortunes in this era of stiff international competition. It proves that old-fashioned bureaucratic red tape can be cut for the benefit of forward-thinking communities and for the welfare of the nation as a whole.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Keeping Our Vision Clear

As I drove through the Mountain State earlier this month to attend the dedication of the new West Virginia University (WVU) Eye Institute, I looked upon the marvelous wonders of nature that our Creator has bestowed upon our beautiful state. Who among us, with the good fortune to have vision, can conceive of living in West Virginia without the ability to see the verdant hills, the fuchsia mountain laurels, or the orange-purple glow of a summer sunset on the horizon?

Unfortunately, in West Virginia, more than 100,000 people have visual problems that hamper their enjoyment of life and threaten their independence. It is estimated that the total annual cost of West Virginia's visual problems, including medical bills and lost wages, is \$282 million, according to the WVU Department of Ophthalmology. Over the last five years, the number of eye patients seeking care at WVU has grown by 50 percent, creating a desperate need for more space and more resources.

To help address that growing need, I added \$3 million to a federal appropriations bill in 1999 to make possible construction of the West Virginia University Eye Institute. With the recent completion of the facility, West Virginians will have easy access to eye

care, no matter how complex or challenging their medical problem.

The new Eye Institute will provide one-stop consultation and high-quality clinical care, with specialists of all kinds to serve the needs of every patient in just a single visit. With the latest in modern technology, the Institute will also promote cutting-edge research and education on the causes and treatments of many kinds of vision problems.

To assist those with "low vision," whose needs cannot be met through standard medical procedures, I added \$1 million to an appropriations bill last year to establish, equip, and staff the Appalachian Center for Low Vision Rehabilitation at the WVU Eye Institute. The center will provide "low vision" patients with rehabilitation counseling, occupational therapy, mobility training, and links to available social services.

The WVU Eye Institute deals with vision, but vision is certainly much more than eyesight. The facility is part of a vision for a future when basic health care is available to all West Virginians. I applaud those at WVU involved with the long planning process for the new Eye Institute, and I look forward to the improved access to eye care that it will provide for West Virginians for decades to come.

June 6, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Cupboard Is Bare

The recent decision by Vermont Senator James Jeffords to leave the Republican Party sparked an unprecedented event in history. For the first time, in the middle of a Congressional session, control of the U.S. Senate changed from one political party to another. This shift returns me to the chairmanship of the Senate Appropriations Committee. While I welcome the job, I wish that this sudden change were accompanied by the financial resources needed to address our nation's many pressing challenges. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

For more than a decade, Congress has tightened the federal fiscal belt in order to pare down the deficit, pay down the national debt, and protect Social Security and Medicare. With the help of a strong economy, that exercise in fiscal restraint has resulted in projected surpluses which ought to be used to address current and future national needs.

But the predicted surpluses are being swept away by the Administration's massive, \$1.35 trillion tax cut, which I vigorously opposed because it devours the surpluses and reduces Congress' ability to address many outstanding problems. According to a report card issued earlier this year by the American Society of Civil Engineers, these problems loom large. The engineers graded the country's roads at D+, our schools at

D-, and our drinking water systems at D. Because of the colossal tax cut and the resulting budgetary constraints, those poor marks are unlikely to improve anytime soon.

To pay for the \$1.35 trillion tax cut, the Fiscal Year 2002 Budget Resolution -- Congress' spending blueprint -- mandates a \$5.5 billion cut in funding for transportation, education, health care, veterans, and a host of other important programs. President Bush later this year also plans to send to Congress an additional budget request for increased military expenditures which will likely require even more cuts in funding for our national infrastructure needs.

I am proud to have regained the title of Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. My dilemma, however, is how to meet the needs of West Virginia and of the nation, such as to shore up Social Security and Medicare and to fund a prescription drug benefit, when so many dollars will be needed for the tax cut.

This colossal tax cut will siphon off the funds necessary to confront the foregoing challenges. It has tied the hands of the Appropriations Committee to a considerable extent. And to top it off, the American taxpayer will be called upon to bear the cost -- a whopping \$116 million! -- of mailing out the tax rebate checks.

June 13, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting Patients' Rights

Today, approximately 180 million Americans are enrolled in managed care health plans. While there is general agreement that managed care has helped to reduce medical costs in recent years, there is also evidence of a troubling and growing trend among health insurance plans to move medical decisions out of the doctor's office and into an accountant's office.

For five years, there has been a bipartisan effort to return medical decisions to the doctor and patient. Congress has worked to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights -- one that protects all Americans in all health plans, guarantees access to needed health care specialists, and includes an enforcement mechanism to make sure that these rights are administered. But, for five years, special interests have blocked such legislation.

In the coming days, Congress will renew this debate. Specifically, we will examine legislation that represents a balanced approach toward ensuring patient safety and health plan accountability without significantly raising health plan premiums or employer costs.

The Patients' Bill of Rights would ensure that patients with a serious illness are allowed access to a specialist without having to get the permission of an accountant who does not have medical training. The bill would give patients the authority to go to any

emergency room during a medical emergency, when every minute is critical, without waiting for preapproval by their health insurer. The proposal also would provide women with direct access to their obstetrician/gynecologist, and would provide children with direct access to their pediatrician. Finally, the legislation would hold managed care plans accountable if those plans are found to be responsible for a patient's disability or death.

This bipartisan initiative has the support of nearly 600 consumer and health care organizations, including the American Medical Association and the American Nurses Association. In fact, most of these provisions have been endorsed by the managed care industry's own trade association as voluntary standards that its members should follow.

Five years is long enough to wait for these protections. According to a study by the Kaiser Family Foundation, each day of delay leaves 35,000 patients without access to the specialized care that they need. Each day of delay results in 10,000 doctors treating patients who have been harmed because a managed care plan, for financial reasons, refused to approve a simple diagnostic test. It is time to end the delay. It is time for doctors and patients to make medical decisions again, not accountants and bureaucrats.

June 20, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Better Late than Never

The Bush Administration has finally heeded the urgent call from communities across West Virginia and the nation to initiate an investigation into the continuing surge of foreign steel products into the American market. This decision to launch what is termed a "Section 201" investigation into the steel import crisis is welcome, but long overdue.

Since late 1997, the American steel industry has been decimated by a flood of below-cost and subsidized foreign imports. These import waves have washed away thousands of jobs and forced at least 18 U.S. steel companies into bankruptcy, including Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel.

The Section 201 investigation, which is perhaps the most powerful trade tool that the United States has, can help to level what has become an increasingly tilted playing field. After thoroughly reviewing the steel import crisis and its damaging effects on U.S. companies and workers, the International Trade Commission will make recommendations to the President on how to remedy the trade imbalance. I am hopeful that the investigation finally can lead to the kind of remedies that will provide long-

overdue relief to domestic steel producers.

Travel through West Virginia's Northern Panhandle and you can see how vital the steel companies are to the area's economy. Those plants provide thousands of jobs directly, and even more indirectly. On a national level, a healthy steel industry is critical to our security. Our military relies on steel for its ships, tanks, and fighter jets. American steel keeps our military strong. But if the domestic steel industry disappears, our national defense and the economic health of many communities could collapse.

Last year, I included an amendment to an appropriations bill that called on the President to initiate the Section 201 probe. I will continue to urge the Administration to provide relief to the beleaguered steel industry. It is past time for the Executive Branch to take an active role in defending American steel from unfair trade. It is my hope that the Section 201 investigation is the first step toward providing domestic steel producers, their employees, and the communities that rely on the steel industry, the reprieve necessary to get back on solid ground.

June 27, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Haste Makes Waste on Missile Defense

The President recently concluded a trip to Europe where he attempted to convince foreign leaders of the need for an American missile defense system. It seems that our allies in Europe have reservations about this apparent rush to judgment on a missile shield, and I can understand why.

The challenges of deploying an effective missile shield remain great. The last two anti-missile tests, performed in January and July of 2000, were failures. Military officers involved in the project have called the Bush Administration's 2004 deployment date "high risk," meaning that there is no guarantee that a system deployed by 2004 would provide any useful defense at all. I cannot support the deployment of a multi-billion-dollar scarecrow that would not be an effective defense if a missile were actually launched at our shores.

This year, the U.S. will spend \$4.3 billion on all of the various programs related to missile defense. But that is just a down payment. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that a limited missile defense system would cost \$30 billion, while a more comprehensive defense shield could range in cost from \$60 billion to a colossal \$120 billion. The

Brookings Institution reported that, since 1962, the federal government has spent \$99 billion on missile defense. For all of that money, I do not believe that our national security has been increased one bit.

The simple fact of missile defense is that it will always be of limited use. While there are those who equate a national missile defense system with a safe and secure nation, such a system will never detect a lone terrorist who crosses our borders armed with a chemical or biological weapon or with a portable nuclear bomb. That is why I continue to urge the Administration to pay greater attention to these immediate dangers. The flashy idea of missile defense should not distract us from other, perhaps more serious, threats to our national security.

There may be a road that eventually leads to an effective missile defense system, but that road must be paved with common sense. We must engage our friends, and listen to our critics; learn from the past, and invest wisely; test carefully, and assess constantly. But most of all, we must avoid haste. We cannot afford to embark on a quixotic quest that could damage our national security and waste billions of dollars in the process.

July 4, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Derail Fast Track

Once again, a President is pressing for special authority to ram through international trade agreements with little input from Congress. As supporters of this so-called "fast-track" authority, many members of the House of Representatives, and some of my colleagues in the Senate, advocate a wholesale surrender of Congress' Constitutional authority over foreign commerce.

Although the President is given the power to negotiate with foreign governments, Congress has the responsibility to accept, reject, or modify any proposed trade agreements. Under fast track, Congress would forsake its duty and would agree to consider most trade legislation under mandatory deadlines, with limited debate and no amendments. This blurs a very clear line that separates the Executive and the Legislative branches of the federal government.

Fast-track authority could also very easily allow the principles of fair trade to be undermined. In the new world of international trade, our trading partners often come to the table proposing elaborate changes to U.S. laws that could harm American industries and close factory doors. The domestic workers who would suffer by such proposed modifications are given no voice in this process. Under fast-track authority, the voice of Congress is also essentially

muted. The House and Senate would become mere rubber stamps for potentially flawed trade laws.

I oppose any such efforts that would tie the hands of Congress and deny the people fair representation. I am against fast track. Too many American workers, companies, and communities have felt the sting of unfair trade for too long. Let the Administration proponents of fast track come to West Virginia and talk to the steelworkers who lost their jobs because of illegal trade practices. Let the advocates of fast track attempt to explain how their plans will help communities -- like those in our state that once boasted garment and shoemaking factories and glass and pottery plants that have gone out business as a result of unfair trade practices.

Although I support increased international trade, it must be fair trade. Fast track certainly does not guarantee a level playing field for U.S. industries. Instead, it puts American industries and workers at a disadvantage. Fast track invokes on the Senate a gag rule. It violates Senators' constitutional liberties of freedom of speech and the right to amend. We cannot permit this odious authority to weaken our voices, to sap the vigor of our democratic institutions, and to blind us to the needs of American communities.

July 11, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Entertaining the Notion of Responsibility

The entertainment industry has greater influence today than ever before on young people. Children are bombarded by movies, television programs, music, and electronic games with adult-oriented themes. Although this industry in the past has resisted government regulation by instituting voluntary ratings systems, recent evidence proves that these voluntary efforts have not gone far enough.

Last fall, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) released a report which concluded that the entertainment industry routinely targets children under the age of 17 for products that the industry's own ratings systems deem inappropriate, including those that warrant parental caution due to violent content. The FTC found evidence of marketing schemes that expressly focus on enticing young people to indulge in adult-oriented entertainment. These marketing plans included the purchase and placement of advertisements that hock music, videos, and electronic games in media outlets likely to reach children.

Although the entertainment industry promised to clean up its act, the FTC released a follow-up review six months after its initial report, which found that many of the objectionable practices continue. The review indicated that the motion picture and electronic games industries had "made some progress both in limiting advertising in popular teen media and in providing rating information in ad-

vertising." However, the report stated that the music recording industry, unlike its counterparts, had not made any real efforts to shield children from adult products.

Because entertainment companies have repeatedly violated the public's trust, focusing more on profits than on the well-being of young people, I have co-sponsored legislation that would help to prevent these businesses from marketing adult-rated products to children. This bill would expand the FTC's authority to crack down on companies that engage in "false and deceptive advertising practices." Businesses found to be peddling adult material to minors would be subject to fines of up to \$11,000 per day.

This legislation would not affect all entertainment companies. Those businesses that actively enforce the voluntary rating systems and do not market adult-rated materials to children will not face any penalties. But for those companies that continue to market inappropriate material to minors, this legislation would hit them where it hurts -- in their wallets.

The job of raising young people in today's culture is difficult enough without the entertainment industry's overwhelming them with inappropriate, adult material. By holding accountable the companies that target children, I hope that this legislation will make the job of parents a little easier.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Commitment to Disaster Recovery

Once again, West Virginians are cleaning up from severe flooding that exacted a heavy toll from our people and our state. It is an almost indescribable scene for many families who have watched their homes and belongings washed away by the flood. For many, the July flood comes just weeks after they finished cleaning up from May's heavy rains that prompted a federal disaster declaration.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) estimates that it will take at least \$180 million for West Virginians to recover from this flooding. This is far too much for any county to handle on its own without much-needed federal assistance. To help West Virginians affected by flooding, I recently secured Senate Appropriations Committee approval of \$2 billion for FEMA's disaster contingency fund for the coming fiscal year. In addition to responding to West Virginia's flood, FEMA will be able to use the money for other natural disasters across the country.

The grants that FEMA can provide to individuals and businesses affected by natural disasters can be crucial to the local attempts to rebuild. This funding should help many West Virginians who face the diffi-

cult task of reclaiming their homes and communities in the months ahead.

In an effort to provide more immediate assistance, I have added \$16 million to legislation signed into law by the President to alleviate the flooding devastation in West Virginia. Of that funding, \$8 million would assist the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service in its efforts to remove debris and obstructions to waterways that pose a threat to property or human safety. The remaining \$8 million would assist the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in restoration of streams and crucial public infrastructure, such as water and sewer facilities. This is just a small step in the recovery process, but it is an important step to take.

Despite the tragedy caused by the flooding, West Virginians have pulled through for their own. I thank the thousands of National Guardsmen, firefighters, law enforcement officials, Red Cross volunteers, State Office of Emergency Services personnel, and countless others who have worked to save lives since the crisis began. Their efforts have helped to prevent this disaster from taking an even larger toll on West Virginia.

July 25, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Accountable Accounting at the Pentagon

The United States has the most powerful military in the world, with highly trained and disciplined men and women who use the most sophisticated technology available to defend our country and deter our adversaries. But this power comes with a considerable price tag: in Fiscal Year 2001, we will spend more than \$310 billion to maintain our national security.

However, no one knows for sure how the military spends its money, what exactly it owns, and, consequently, what it really needs. This is because the accounting systems of the Department of Defense are in such disarray that investigators cannot even begin to audit its books.

One recent investigation found that, out of \$1.1 billion in emergency funds that Congress appropriated in 1999 for the Pentagon to purchase urgently needed spare parts, 92 percent was transferred to an account that can pay for anything from aircraft repairs to administrative expenses. Once in that account, the military's bookkeepers could not track where the money went or how it was spent. It is disgraceful that the Department of Defense could spend more than \$1 billion, but not show the American people so much as a receipt for what was purchased.

Balancing the military's books is not as exciting as designing or purchasing the next generation of airplanes, tanks, or ships, but it is just as important. Every dollar wasted on unimportant programs is one less dollar available for training, increased pay, or improved housing for military personnel.

I first brought this issue to the attention of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld when he appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee for his confirmation hearing in January. After my questioning, and upon taking office, Secretary Rumsfeld began a review of the Department's financial management systems. He has pledged to formulate a plan to address these massive accounting problems.

Because of the size of our Armed Forces, it will take many years before the military's books are sorted out. But that reform must begin immediately. As a first step, I included a provision in an appropriations bill recently approved by the Senate to require the Pentagon to report to Congress on its future purchases of spare parts. As we have seen, even a seemingly minor component of our national security, like spare parts, if left unchecked, can become a major waste of taxpayer dollars.

August 1, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Safe Schools: A Shared Responsibility

As the days of summer draw to a close, parents soon will send their children back to the classrooms for the start of another school year.

In an effort to find new methods to protect students and teachers, I added \$100,000 to a federal appropriations bill last year to support a collaborative approach toward preventing violent schoolhouse tragedies, visited upon other states, from occurring in West Virginia. This funding, which was recently released by the U.S. Department of Education, will assist the West Virginia University (WVU) Extension Service to develop training materials for specialized workshops to be held at three pilot middle schools or junior high schools throughout the 2001-2002 school year. As a team, WVU Extension agents and on-site school coordinators from each pilot school will conduct specialized training seminars for teachers and other school personnel.

This project will take advantage of the knowledge and insights of those closest to the problem -- namely, the teachers, administrators, and students who spend at least eight hours a day in the schools.

It will pair their experiences with the technical and research expertise at WVU to create thorough, creative approaches for the prevention of school violence. The results of the pilot project will be evaluated at the end of the school year.

This initiative builds on the success of a pair of school violence prevention conferences that I cohosted previously with WVU President David C. Hardesty. In August 1999, we welcomed parents, teachers, lawmakers, police officers, and faith leaders to the first-ever statewide symposium on school safety. That event was followed by a students-only Youth Summit, held in April 2000 at WVU and seven other sites across the state. The recommendations from these events have helped to shape this new pilot project.

Tragedies can occur at any school at any time. Ending this problem is a shared responsibility. It will take a concerted effort, like the one under way at West Virginia University -- which blends the insights of teachers, students, parents, and community organizations -- to develop and institute the comprehensive measures that are necessary to ensure classrooms remain safe.

August 8, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Hitting the Brakes on Unsafe Mexican Trucks

Seven years after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect, the costs associated with that misguided agreement -- which I opposed -- are becoming increasingly clear. In February, a NAFTA dispute panel, examining a Mexican challenge to U.S. trucking restrictions, concluded that Mexican trucks must be allowed to enter the U.S., despite the danger that these unregulated trucks could cause to the safety of American citizens.

In accordance with that recent decision, the Bush Administration announced its intention to lift the crossing gate to Mexican trucks sometime before January 1, 2002. I believe that we ought not to take that step without, at least, establishing measures to prevent the hazards that these trucks could pose to Americans on the road.

Mexican truck- and driver-safety standards are nearly nonexistent. There is no truck-safety rating system in that country, nor are there comprehensive truck equipment standards. Mexican law fails to require many of the fundamentals of highway safety that are mandated by U.S. law and regulation, such as restrictions on daily hours of service that can prevent an overworked truck driver from risking his life and the lives of others.

I opposed NAFTA because I felt that it was bad policy. Like so many other

such agreements, I felt that it subverted the needs of our working families to the free trade agenda of the White House. I was concerned that NAFTA would make it easier for Mexico to attract American companies and jobs to go south of the Mexican border. Not only is that prediction coming true, but also NAFTA now is allowing Mexico to export danger onto our highways with these unregulated, unsafe trucks.

In February, I contacted U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick and Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta to urge that the Bush Administration not compromise the safety of America's highways. Recently, the Senate approved legislation, which I supported, that would implement stringent standards for Mexican trucks crossing into the U.S. The Senate Transportation Appropriations bill would require border inspections of trucks and on-site safety audits of Mexican trucking companies. The legislation would also mandate that Mexican trucks cross the border only at facilities manned by U.S. inspectors.

Until the U.S. and Mexico can agree upon comprehensive standards for trucks, and until those standards can be enforced effectively, we must stand against efforts that would compromise the safety of Americans traveling on our nation's roads.

August 15, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Casting a Vote for Election Reform

The right to vote is fundamental to our Republic. It is the central means by which the American people express their views, and thereby direct the future of the nation. But, as we saw in last year's Presidential election, casting one's ballot is not the end of the process. Votes must be verified and counted quickly and accurately, so that the American people have confidence in our election process. Preserving the integrity of the voting system is critical to the preservation of our representative form of government.

Over the years, the percentage of eligible voters who take the time to go to the polls has declined. I find it disappointing that American citizens would fail to exercise this precious right and important responsibility. Yet, I well understand how the spectacle of last year's elections and the irregularities that were widely reported can exacerbate a common misconception that one's vote does not count. The federal government should do more to reignite a passion for citizen participation if we are to pass on the principles of our representative democracy to future generations.

To this end, I have co-sponsored the Equal Protection of Voting Rights Act -- legislation aimed at reform-

ing the elections process in order to avoid the types of problems which were highlighted in the 2000 elections. This bill proposes three basic electoral reforms. It would require states to adopt uniform statewide standards for election machinery by 2004; it would require states to allow provisional voting -- that is, voters whose qualifications are challenged at the polls could vote, on the condition that their eligibility would be confirmed later; it would also require states to send all voters a sample ballot at least ten days prior to all federal elections, starting in 2004.

The bill would also establish a 12-member bipartisan commission to study possible improvements in voter registration, participation, and election technology. Additionally, the act would create a grant program, administered by the U.S. Department of Justice, to provide funds for states and localities to purchase updated technology, improve voter registration systems, and educate voters and poll workers prior to the 2004 elections.

I think it is critical that Congress work to enact election reform. This is the first important step in restoring confidence in our election process.

August 22, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Figuring in Fair Trade

I support increased international trade. However, I do not believe that increased trade should come at the cost of fair treatment for American workers and industries. That is why I have voted against trade pacts that would carry a heavy price tag of lost U.S. jobs and businesses. I have opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) with China, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and other agreements that I thought did not serve the best interests of most American workers and their families. Workers in the garment industry, the steel industry, the glass and pottery industries, and certain other trades in West Virginia and across the nation have seen their livelihoods shipped to foreign countries because of misguided U.S. trade policy.

The Constitution gives Congress the exclusive authority to "regulate commerce with foreign nations." But, for too long, Congress has taken a back seat to Presidents bent on ramming through trade agreements that focus more on our foreign trading partners than on our interests at home. As a result, the American people have less input into trade agreements than they should have.

To help produce more balanced trade pacts, U.S. negotiators ought to have more input from the public's Congressional representatives. Expanded Congressional participation will help

to reinforce the framework of fair trade. It will give trade agreements greater legitimacy and increase public understanding of the costs and benefits of globalization. The Constitution demands that Congress make this effort, and the people expect it.

That is why Senator Max Baucus of Montana and I recently introduced legislation to create a Congressional Trade Office (CTO). This nonpartisan trade office, modeled on the Congressional Budget Office which provides Congress with unbiased budget data, would allow Congress better access to information about trade negotiations and the impact of trade agreements on the U.S. economy. The CTO would provide Congress with trade data and analyses, observe negotiations, evaluate trade dispute resolution proceedings, and monitor international compliance with major trade agreements.

It is Congress's duty under the Constitution to make sure that American interests are properly reflected as marketplaces around the world become more interconnected. The Congressional Trade Office would provide Congress with the information necessary to act as a watchdog for the interests of U.S. workers and industries. Establishment of such an office would help to ensure that the wrecking ball of unfair trade does not continue to topple the hopes and dreams of American families.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Coarsening of Our Culture

Television can have a profound impact on young people. Children all across the country have benefited through the years from educational programs such as "Sesame Street" and "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood." But it seems that, in recent years, television broadcasters have turned a blind eye to their influence on children. Bad programming has far outweighed good programming, and we are seeing the woeful results in our society. A recent report from the Parents Television Council (PTC) delivers some sobering news. The study confirms that shows broadcast during hours when children are most likely to watch television continue to be more vulgar, more sexually explicit, and more violent. The study showed that between 8:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. -- the so-called "Family Hour" -- objectionable material on television had risen 24 percent in just two years.

Between the 1998-1999 and the 2000-2001 television seasons, the PTC found that the use of vulgar language on television shows had increased 78 percent and that violence had jumped 70 percent. According to the study, 15 percent of all violent incidents in these shows involved a gun. The PTC examined six weeks -- nearly 200 hours -- of programming on ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, UPN, and the WB networks.

The influence that these vulgar and violent images have on our children is of great concern to me. That is why I am cosponsoring legislation that would promote voluntary decency standards within the entertainment industry. The proposed Children's Protection Act would permit entertainment companies to devise voluntary codes of conduct for television programming, movies, video games, Internet content, and music.

According to the Television Bureau of Advertising, the average child watches more than three hours of television a day -- and one of those hours is usually the Family Hour. By the time that this child has reached the age of 18, he or she has seen 13,000 killings and 100,000 violent acts. In an age when children who commit violent crimes often model their acts after characters on television, in the movies, or in video games, it is long past time for entertainment executives to accept responsibility for their actions.

It is a shame that what passes these days for entertainment is so polluted with violence and vulgarity. It is an even greater concern when this profane "entertainment" is directed toward children. The Children's Protection Act, and the decency standards that it hopefully initiates, can be a first step toward reclaiming the airwaves for families.

September 5, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Quarter Century of Hope

On December 6, 1907, explosions at a coal mine at Monongah in Marion County claimed the lives of 362 men and boys. Although this event stands as the worst mine disaster in American history, it is only one of many tragedies that have befallen U.S. coal miners through the years.

As a boy growing up in the coalfields of Southern West Virginia, and later as a public official representing coal miners and their families, I have seen firsthand the devastating effects of coal mining on the health and safety of miners. It was this concern for miner safety that prompted me in 1969 to suggest that the federal government create a mine safety training facility. After many discussions, and my efforts to obtain \$29.5 million in federal appropriations through the years, the National Mine Health and Safety Academy was formally established and dedicated on August 17, 1976.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Academy, located in Beaver, Raleigh County. Coal mining remains one of the most dangerous occupations in the country. But thanks to the efforts of the Academy over the last quarter century, the U.S. has made great strides to reduce the risk of

injury and death to coal miners. In the year before the Academy was dedicated, 155 miners were killed on the job. Last year, the number had dropped to 38.

The Academy has become the world's largest educational institution devoted solely to safety and health in mining. Thanks to the Academy's dedicated staff and first class training facilities, America is the world's leader in the promotion of mine safety. Miners, mine inspectors, and others involved in coal mining from Bulgaria, China, South Africa, Peru, Ukraine, Russia, and other nations have all come to the Raleigh County facility to study cutting-edge mine safety techniques.

While we can look back with justifiable pride over the accomplishments of the National Mine Health and Safety Academy over the past 25 years, we must renew our determination to do even better in the years ahead. Accidents will always occur in coal mines and there will always be tragedies that we cannot foresee or prevent. But vigilance, knowledge, and training -- as provided by the Academy -- remain the miner's best weapons against accidents. Training and education can mean the difference between life and death.

September 12, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

America Stands Determined

From coast to coast, Americans watched in disbelief as hijacked airplanes crashed into a pair of our nation's most recognizable landmarks -- the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon just across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. The terrorists may have believed that their attack would undermine our nation, but they were wrong.

America stands strong. America stands united. America stands determined.

We are certainly a nation in mourning. We mourn those who were killed in the brutal and heartless terrorist attacks on America. We grieve for their families, friends, and coworkers. We pray for those who were injured.

Above all, we pray for peace, and we vow to leave no stone unturned as we search for a solution to the extremism and the intolerance that led to the massacres at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the plane crash in Pennsylvania. We shall seek out those responsible for these acts of terrorism, but we shall not seek to perpetuate a cycle of violence.

In an effort to provide assistance to the people who were victims of the attacks as well as to provide the President with the immediate financial resources he needs to fight back against terrorism, Congress has approved \$40 billion in emer-

gency funding. Immediately following the attacks, I met with President Bush to discuss how best to respond. We agreed that this emergency funding is an important first step.

Like most Americans, I am astonished by the sophistication, organization, and complexity of the terrorist attack on the United States. These attacks took elaborate planning, significant manpower, and detailed knowledge of U.S. aircraft and aviation systems. While I have great admiration for our intelligence agencies, it is frankly beyond belief that such a massive assault on our nation could be executed without any discernable signals. It is beyond belief that our nation, with its vast network of worldwide intelligence resources, could be caught so utterly unprepared.

That is why we need to rebuild our intelligence capabilities, improve security at our airports, rebuild the Pentagon, and repair the devastation of New York's financial district.

America is certainly a changed nation as a result of this terrorist assault. We have entered a new and unfamiliar era. But one thing will not change. American resolve and American confidence will remain, strengthened by our renewed commitment to one another and to the ideals of the great country we all love.

September 19, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Proud Heritage, a Bright Future

Even as West Virginia communities move forward with efforts to modernize and revitalize their economies, preserving the heritage of the Mountain State remains a top priority. The activities underway in the City of Wheeling, which combine economic development with historic appreciation, could serve as a model for others to follow.

The history of Wheeling, West Virginia's first capital, is America's history. The story of the community and its river port, which played a key role in the early industrial development of the United States, not only provides a glimpse into America's past but can also provide insight into where we are going as a nation. This is the mission of the Wheeling National Heritage Area project -- to preserve the lessons of history for future generations so that they are better prepared to lead.

The heritage project, which is a joint federal-local initiative, seeks to revitalize Wheeling's historic downtown area while also showcasing the city's rich cultural traditions. I recently participated in the dedication of the Wheeling Heritage Port, a component in the overall development plan. Throughout much of its history, the Wheeling port served as the crossing between the civilized East and the wild West. Thousands passed through this portal searching for their destiny, filled with dreams of fortune, energized by the

call of the unknown. The restored port, with its interpretive displays, will allow visitors to see firsthand the important historical and natural resources that made Wheeling a 19th-century hub of transportation, commerce, and Victorian culture.

I have supported Wheeling's efforts to rejuvenate its downtown through the National Heritage Area initiative by adding more than \$23 million to appropriations bills for the various heritage projects, including \$9.1 million for construction of the Robert C. Byrd Intermodal Transportation Center, which was dedicated in 1998 and houses the Wheeling Visitors Center; \$5.1 million for construction of the Artisan Center, dedicated in 1999 and featuring retail space that focuses on West Virginia artists; and \$6.7 million for development of the Heritage Port.

Wheeling's endeavors are an example of the hard work of Northern Panhandle residents in transitioning from a solely industrial economy to a diversified economic base, while at the same time retaining the cultural and historic character of the region. The Wheeling National Heritage Area initiative has put the community's traditions and treasures on display for the world to see, while at the same time propelling the city toward a brighter future.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Righting Rural Wrongs in Health Care

Across West Virginia, especially in our more rural areas, there is a serious shortage of doctors. Too often, families must travel long distances to see a physician, and even farther if specialized care is required. That is why, throughout my career of public service, I have worked to expand the reach of our medical facilities.

One such effort is the Robert C. Byrd Center for Rural Health, based at Marshall University. This center, constructed through \$4.5 million that I added to appropriations legislation in 1992, serves as the base for Marshall's rural medicine outreach programs, which serve counties throughout Southern West Virginia.

The West Virginia School for Osteopathic Medicine, located in Greenbrier County, is another important rural health care provider. Through the Robert C. Byrd Clinic, the school is very involved in the medical treatment of rural West Virginians. I added \$4 million to an appropriations bill in 1995 to help fund the clinic's construction.

My most recent effort to improve the accessibility of health care is underway at West Virginia University (WVU). WVU is in the process of developing a new medical campus to serve residents in the Eastern Panhandle. The new Eastern Clinical Campus, made pos-

sible through \$3.4 million that I added to legislation last year, will work with medical institutions, health care providers, and communities across the region. In addition to housing primary and specialty care physicians, the campus will train young people to become medical professionals.

The new medical campus will fill a large gap in West Virginia's health care network, specifically in the Eastern Panhandle. While that region is one of the state's fastest-growing areas, it is plagued by a terrible doctor shortage. The state averages 16.8 physicians for every 10,000 residents, but the Eastern Panhandle has only 9.26 doctors per 10,000 residents, according to WVU. The national average is about 20 physicians per 10,000 people.

West Virginians are proud of their history, their heritage, and their mountains. But that same rugged, rural terrain has been an obstacle for access to quality health care close to home. I hope that the funding that I added to legislation over the past decade will help West Virginia University, Marshall University, and the School for Osteopathic Medicine to overcome the obstacles that prevent many West Virginians from receiving the quality medical treatment that they deserve.

October 3, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

An Ounce of Prevention

In the wake of the brutal and heartless terrorist attacks on the United States, federal officials have started to reassess the strengths and weaknesses of the nation's emergency response capabilities. One area that has received increased attention is the threat of chemical or biological weapons, such as anthrax or smallpox, and America's ability to respond effectively to such an assault.

While our firefighters, police officers, and emergency medical personnel have shown that they can respond quickly to any emergency, these rescue workers will need the rapid support of trained specialists and scientific professionals in the event of a chemical or biological attack. If such an attack occurs, quick and accurate information for emergency personnel will be the first line of defense.

Following the tragedy of September 11, it is clear that our public health system must become part of our national defense. I discussed these very issues in a recent letter to the President and during a Senate hearing on bioterrorism with Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson. Unfortunately, the public health infrastructure in this country has not kept pace with the potential threat.

While there is much work to be done across the country, an innovative approach that can benefit the entire nation is already underway in the hills of West Virginia. I added \$1 million to appropriations legislation last year and an additional \$4 million to Fiscal Year 2002 appropriations bills to create the Virtual Medical Campus at West Virginia University (WVU). The Virtual Medical Campus will be the computer network and national information delivery service of the National Training Center for Homeland Security that is being developed collaboratively by WVU and the West Virginia National Guard. The Virtual Medical Campus will link doctors and emergency personnel who respond to chemical and biological attacks with specialists who can immediately identify the steps that must be taken to protect the public.

As the old saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." I am proud that West Virginia, through the Virtual Medical Campus, is at the forefront of efforts to prevent further tragedies. By providing crucial knowledge to the public health community and other disaster response groups nationwide, this initiative will help to protect the lives and health of all citizens.

October 10, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Reclaiming the Safety of Coalfield Communities

For decades, West Virginia miners have extracted the coal that has powered our nation. The fruits of this labor brought about an industrial expansion that catapulted the United States to economic dominance in the last century. But in some cases, after the mines were no longer useful, they were left in such poor condition that they threatened the safety of coalfield residents.

In West Virginia and across the country, the backlog of abandoned mines is growing to dangerous levels. The federal government's Office of Surface Mining reports that West Virginia has more than 2,300 abandoned coal mine sites, the most of any state in the nation. That is more than \$766 million worth of mine reclamation needed in the Mountain State.

These old mines have posed health and safety threats to nearby residents for many years. In some instances, children have died after falling into abandoned mine shafts. Other mines stand on the verge of collapse. And, in many cases, acid mine drainage threatens water quality for nearby communities.

To address these concerns, Congress, in 1977, created the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation program. This initiative provides states with funds

to repair mined lands left in dangerous condition. Through the years, as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I have fought to secure proper funding for these areas that have remained safety hazards for far too long.

To help West Virginia and the nation meet this challenge for Fiscal Year 2002, Congress recently approved the Interior Appropriations bill, which includes \$203.5 million for the Abandoned Mine Land effort. These funds include more than \$36 million that I added to the legislation to make up for short-sighted budget cuts by the Bush Administration that would have increased the already severe backlog of mines awaiting reclamation. We should not shortchange the health, safety, and environmental protections for West Virginia residents that mine reclamation provides.

Those in West Virginia and across the country who live near these abandoned mines have the right to be safe and secure. It is my hope that the funding provided to the Abandoned Mine Land initiative will help to address this very serious health and safety shortfall. The people of America's coalfields, who have been so crucial to our nation's economic progress, deserve no less.

October 17, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Homeland Security: A Sound Investment

As the nation struggles with a slowing economy and the lingering fears from the unprecedented terrorist attacks of September 11, America remains committed to recovery. The best way to cure our economic and psychological ills and to place the nation back on the road to prosperity is a commitment to America's homeland security infrastructure.

By investing in measures that strengthen our ability to guard citizens here at home, we can take an important step toward removing the paralysis that results from living in fear. The surest way to stabilize the economy and to encourage Americans to get back on airplanes, back into the shopping malls, and back to visiting automobile dealerships, neighborhood restaurants, and movie theaters is to take aggressive steps to address fears about future terrorist attacks.

I doubt many Americans find comfort in learning that the Immigration and Naturalization Service cannot account for how 6 of the 19 hijackers involved in the September 11 attacks entered the United States. Likewise, how much comfort do the American people find in knowing that the U.S. Customs Service inspects only 2 percent of the cargo entering the United States?

Our nation's transportation network and chemi-

cal and biological terrorism response capabilities face similarly daunting upgrades. In the days immediately following the September 11 attacks, airport security was improved, but much more remains to be done. And the recent anthrax scares have shown us that we must expand our nation's reserve of vaccines and antibiotics and provide our local health departments with access to the nation's computerized networks of medical response information.

The same case can be made for improvements to roads and bridges, railroads, water and sewer systems, and law enforcement capabilities. Due to years of neglect, we have allowed our infrastructure in these areas to become antiquated. With the threat of further violence on American soil, everything from dams to nuclear power plants to the method of transporting the nation's food supply must be examined in terms of its potential vulnerability.

Unless we take immediate and serious steps to address the various infrastructure shortfalls, then all of the rhetoric about normalcy is just hot air. By renewing our commitment to investments in our own country, we can help to mend the holes in America's homeland security. This is the surest way to remove the nation's psychology of fear, and we need to begin now.

October 24, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Guaranteeing the Future of American Steel

As the steel industry restructured itself throughout the last quarter of the 20th Century, the dogged determination of American companies and steelworkers allowed the United States to maintain its status as the most efficient and effective steel producer in the world. But, despite their best efforts to remain competitive, the working men and women of the American steel industry have come under assault from the forces of unfair trade.

Since late 1997, foreign nations have continued to flood the American market with subsidized and below-cost steel products. As the flood tides of cheap imports have risen, U.S. steelworkers and their families have suffered. To date, thousands of steelworkers have lost their jobs and more than 20 steel companies have declared bankruptcy.

It was with this situation in mind that I created an initiative in 1999 to provide short-term relief to the beleaguered American steel industry through the form of federally guaranteed loans. The \$1 billion Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee Act allows for a much-needed economic boost to steel companies damaged by unfair trade. Unfortunately,

domestic steel producers have had a difficult time receiving the financial assistance intended for them through this loan guarantee program because of the continuing steel import crisis.

To help increase the effectiveness of this important initiative and to make it more responsive to industry needs, I successfully amended the loan guarantee program. In October, Congress gave final approval to my changes, which include increasing the federal guarantee on loans, extending the period of repayment, and increasing the lifespan of the overall initiative. It is my hope that these amendments will spur private lenders to assist this industry that has been so vital to the growth and well-being of our nation. For too long, steelworkers, their families, and the regions that rely on steel for their survival have been devastated by wave after wave of unfair imports. It is long past time to avert disaster and support the domestic steel community. If we do not take every action that we can to support this crucial industry, I am concerned that American steel as we know it will cease to exist.

October 31, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Compassion and Caution: Avoiding Scams

West Virginians stood with the rest of the nation united in grief following the terrorist attacks of September 11. Those heartless, planned assaults are certainly different from the natural disasters that too often strike West Virginia, but the feeling of loss and despair and the need for recovery are the same.

As residents of the Mountain State understand all too well from their struggles against floods, blizzards, and other natural disasters, rebuilding and recovery are made possible by the support and assistance of friends and strangers. In a real spirit of national community, Americans have risen to the challenge to help those in need through donations of blood, money, food, and other goods and services.

Unfortunately, there are scam sharks that swim through the turbulent tides of society waiting for just such an opportunity to strike. In the aftermath of the terrorist assaults, a slew of Internet sites and telemarketers began to seek contributions for families of missing or injured firefighters, children orphaned by the tragedy, and pets left homeless. While some of these pleas were from legitimate charitable organizations that have raised more than \$1 billion to assist the victims of the attacks, other pleas were the work of scam artists bent on taking advantage of good-hearted Americans.

Officials at the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) have been on heightened alert looking out for consumer scams in the wake of September 11. In an effort to counter the con artists, they have issued helpful guidelines for charitable giving. These precautions are available on my Internet site -- <http://byrd.senate.gov>. By taking simple steps, such as refusing to give out credit card or bank account numbers over the telephone, individuals can stop scam artists in their tracks.

In this digital age, it is also important to know that these crimes are not only perpetrated over the telephone. In Fairmont, officials at the Internet Fraud Complaint Center (IFCC) have reported a sharp increase in national e-mail solicitation scams since September 11. The IFCC has suggested that computer users seek information on charities independently, and not respond to unsolicited appeals for donations on the Internet.

Just as officials have preached caution in the aftermath of terror, I remind West Virginians to stay alert when donating to relief efforts. Those who are intent on defrauding the public are no less despicable than the terrorists that have assaulted our country. By exercising prudence and following the FTC's tips, donations will truly go toward helping those in need, and not end up lining the pockets of thieves.

November 7, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting Our Food from Contamination

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, the confidence of the American people has been shaken in a variety of areas, from transportation to public health to food safety. The response to the attacks has focused attention on the many shortcomings that exist in our food safety and inspection networks.

For instance, of the approximately 7,000 known food-borne illnesses, 85 percent are linked to diseases and bacteria that Food and Drug Administration (FDA) inspectors monitor. However, the FDA has sufficient personnel to inspect less than one percent of foods coming into the United States. Similarly, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is responsible for the safety of our nation's meat, poultry, and egg products. Yet, because of the porous state of our nation's borders, the USDA is not able to properly inspect the food entering our country.

To help the United States meet the many challenges confronting these important public health organizations, I have authored a homeland security package that includes critical funding for food safety. This initiative contains \$100 million for the FDA to hire and train new inspectors and to purchase more advanced equipment to better ensure the safety of our nation's food supply.

My proposal also in-

cludes \$636 million for the USDA. These funds would be used for expanded border and import inspections of food. In addition, the money would boost the efforts of specialists who monitor our nation's grain supply for possible contamination. Inspections, especially at the border, should be considered a front-line defense to counter possible terrorist attacks.

Because the USDA also operates many research facilities that house biological agents which could pose a serious public health threat, this funding would tighten security at these facilities. In addition, it would expand the federal investment in the research and development of new ways to protect against and respond to future biological or agricultural acts of terrorism.

For too long, we have failed to invest adequate resources in food safety, in public health, and in so many areas that are invaluable to our homeland security. As a result, we are understaffed, underequipped, and underprepared to handle the variety of threats that the nation now faces. Congress needs to take concrete steps immediately to address these gaps. Investment in our homeland security is the surest way to provide for the safety and rebuild the confidence of the American people.

November 14, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Time for Thanks

It is time again to count our blessings, to sit together at a table surrounded by family and friends, and to offer thanks to the Creator. Thanksgiving can be one of the few times that generations have the chance to gather around a crackling fire to ponder photographs from the past, to slice carrots and mash sweet potatoes, to hear the laughter of children and the gossip from the kitchen, and, of course, to smell the sweet temptation of a juicy turkey slowly roasting. It is a time of gentle companionship around a sudsy sink. These shared experiences are ties that bind families together.

This year, in light of the tragic events of September 11 and the ensuing military action overseas, Thanksgiving will have an even deeper meaning for thousands of families. Many chairs will be empty at the dinner tables. Despite the tragedies that have stricken our nation, we should recognize that there is so much for which we should be thankful.

I am thankful that the American people have the steadfastness and the determination to move forward from the September 11 tragedies. I am thankful that we live in a country that can

confront a crisis with strength and moral certainty without abandoning the very principles and values that we hold most dear.

Like President Washington, who issued a "Thanksgiving Proclamation" for his new nation, we are thankful for "the many favors of Almighty God." Like President Lincoln, who called for a day of Thanksgiving on the third Thursday in November, we are thankful for the "gracious gifts of the most high God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy."

I hope that during this Thanksgiving, West Virginians will take the time to rediscover what it is that makes them a family. A shared address and a designated spot before the hypnotic television set do not make a family, but a group of loving individuals who share laughter, tears, chores, and fun make a true family. So, before devouring that lovingly prepared feast, families should take the time not only to express thanks for the bounty that is set out before them, but also for the opportunity to gather in kinship and to thank God for His manifold blessings.

November 21, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

West Virginia: How Majestic and How Grand

"Oh, the West Virginia hills! How majestic and how grand." These words, from "The West Virginia Hills," one of the Mountain State's official songs, capture the sentiment not only of many West Virginia natives, but also of the thousands of tourists who flock to the state to view its scenic wonders. From its mountains to its rivers, from its flora to its abundant wildlife, West Virginia is blessed with natural beauty.

I have long sought to preserve our state's God-given treasures. This year, I was successful in adding funds to appropriations legislation that was recently signed into law for two of West Virginia's scenic gems: the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the New River Gorge National River.

As the home to 40 different wetland and upland plant communities which support more than 580 species of plants, the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge is one of the largest and most diverse freshwater wetland areas in central and southern Appalachia. The diversity of plants and habitats supports an equally varied wildlife of more than 290 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish.

The \$7.8 million that I added to the legislation will allow the Canaan Valley Refuge to expand by more

than 12,000 acres, providing the refuge with important new resources and broadening what is already one of the nation's most diverse ecological communities. The legislation also provides the refuge with \$875,000 for repairs to dilapidated infrastructure, such as roads and parking areas.

Equally impressive is the New River Gorge National River. Tens of thousands of people from across the country annually visit the area's 70,000 acres, which run along one of the continent's oldest rivers. The \$6.8 million that I added to the bill will allow for the expansion of this West Virginia wonder by 6,800 acres. An additional \$1 million will allow for improvements to visitor access and facilities, such as upgrades to the river's Grandview Visitor Center.

It was West Virginia's natural wonders that inspired these words: "If o'er sea o'er land I roam, Still I'll think of happy home, And my friends among the West Virginia hills." I am proud to have added the funding that will help to preserve the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the New River Gorge National River -- just two of the many examples of our state's scenic beauty that lie nestled within the West Virginia hills.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Victory for American Industry

In the complex world of Washington, commonsense solutions to our nation's problems sometimes are overlooked. When it came to penalties levied against foreign companies charged with unfair trade, the simplest and most equitable remedy fell victim to this tendency. For years, the penalties were collected and deposited in the U.S. Treasury, while the American companies and workers who lost profits and wages from unfair trade did not receive a nickel of compensation.

I was successful in changing this unfortunate situation in legislation that became law last year. Under the Continued Dumping and Subsidy Offset Act, which has come to be known as the Byrd Amendment, the fees collected from foreign companies charged with unfair trade are deposited in a new U.S. Customs Service account and then made available as grants to the domestic industries that have been harmed. These funds would be used for targeted expenses, including health care and pension benefits, personnel training, environmental activities, and production upgrades.

The first round of Byrd Amendment grants was recently awarded and two West Virginia businesses that were injured by unfair trade practices are among the first grant recipients. Ames True Temper of Parkersburg, with 750 em-

ployees, and Warwood Tool Company of Wheeling, which employs 22, will receive crucial funding from the Byrd Amendment account. Ames True Temper, the largest manufacturer and distributor of non powered lawn and garden tools in North America, will receive \$2.3 million through the Byrd Amendment, while Warwood Tool, which produces heavy-duty hand tools, will receive \$200,000. The U.S. International Trade Commission had previously ruled that these companies suffered direct financial losses because of illegal Chinese trade activity.

Currently, the Byrd Amendment is being challenged at the World Trade Organization (WTO) by several nations, including Canada, Mexico, and the 15-nation European Union. These foreign competitors want to flaunt the very trade laws that they negotiated with our government. I hope the WTO will knock down this backdoor attempt to undermine fair trade practices and remind our foreign trading partners that, if they simply follow the laws and agreements that are in place, penalties will never be assessed and Byrd Amendment grants will not be available. Until then, it is my hope that additional injured companies, like Ames True Temper and Warwood Tool Company, will continue to receive the compensation that they deserve.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Constant Vigilance for Steel

After a comprehensive investigation into steel imports that resulted in part from an amendment that I included in legislation last year, the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) has determined what many in West Virginia already know: namely, that imports have caused serious injury to the American steel industry. To help remedy this situation, the ITC recently recommended substantial tariffs for many categories of steel products, including those that are essential to West Virginia integrated steel producers.

While a step in the right direction, some of these proposed penalties fall short of addressing the needs of our steelmakers. The President, who has the authority to accept, reject, or modify the ITC recommendations, should not only act quickly to implement relief to the American steel industry, but also should increase the tariffs levied against steel imports. Only then will American steelmakers gain the breathing space that they so desperately need to improve their precarious financial positions.

Across the country, dozens of steel companies have filed for bankruptcy protection, while thousands of steelworkers have been laid off from their jobs. Since 1980, the industry estimates that nearly 400,000 steel jobs have disappeared. West Virginia has not been immune from this bloodlet-

ting. In the Northern Panhandle, both Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel and Weirton Steel have suffered great financial harm as a result of illegal foreign trade practices. Wheeling-Pitt has filed for bankruptcy, while Weirton Steel, in the first nine months of this year alone, dropped into the red by more than \$353 million.

Enough is enough. American steel producers — the most technologically sophisticated and efficient in the world — have been singled out for elimination by predatory foreign competition. Steelworkers around the country have paid the price for this unconscionable attack on an industry that is vital to our national defense and our economic security. We should not allow that attack to continue unabated.

In 1997, when the waves of foreign steel imports began to crash upon our shores, American steelworkers adopted the motto, "Stand Up for Steel." Never has the need been so great as it is today. With the ITC's recommendations in hand, President Bush has the opportunity to stand up for steel, to stand up for American workers and American companies, and to put in place a fair tariff system that provides our industry with the chance to recover from illegal trade. The livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of steelworkers and a key American industry hang in the balance.

December 12, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Real Story of Christmas

For many, Christmas brings to mind thoughts of stockings, candy canes, mistletoe, and presents wrapped in red and green bows. To be sure, Christmas is a time for children to rush down the stairs in anticipation of the bonanza of presents waiting under the tree. But there is another story that has nothing to do with Santa Claus or snowmen or eggnog. It is the tale of a family who found no shelter but a manger, and also the story of a newborn child who would become the savior of the world.

"And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn," Luke wrote in his Gospel. "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior,

which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

I worry that too many of us have forgotten the true meaning of Christmas. The story of the birth of Christ has been overshadowed by the pressures and strains of a commercialized holiday. Families will spend hours at shopping malls, waiting in long lines, rather than in the company of loved ones or in church celebrating in song or prayer. Sadly, the Christmas season has become the shopping season.

During this holiday, as families mourn those lost to terrorism and pray for the safety of those fighting abroad and defending our homeland, I urge West Virginians to reflect on their families and their faith and to read the story of Jesus' birth in the Gospels. Perhaps, then, the materialism that has come to dominate the season will fade and we can begin to truly understand the great and glorious story of Christmas.

December 19, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

In God's Hands

I have long encouraged Americans of all ages to learn about the rich and colorful history of our country. I firmly believe that the study of events and figures that helped to shape the world's greatest republic is essential to the continued preservation of our nation. Recently, at the invitation of film director Ronald Maxwell, I was provided the unique opportunity to help bring a small piece of American history to life.

Early in the morning of my 84th birthday, on a farm in western Maryland, I made my movie debut as General Paul J. Semmes, an advisor to General Robert E. Lee, during the filming of the Civil War movie, "Gods and Generals." On that day, I stepped out of the reality of representing West Virginia in the Senate and into the cinematic account of the real-life history that gave birth to our state.

In the days since my cameo appearance as General Semmes, I have reflected on our nation's experiences during the Civil War and the lessons that we can draw from our past during the current conflict at home and overseas. I hope that America's public officials will exhibit the same strength of character and dedication to duty that were shown by our nation's leaders during the Civil War.

President Abraham

Lincoln, who led the nation with such courage in a time of turmoil, wrote to a mother who had lost five sons in battle: "I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

It is clear that the American people will also need steadfastness and determination to deal with the aftermath of the September 11 tragedies. I pray that we have the fortitude, the willingness to sacrifice, and the patience that will no doubt be necessary during what I continue to believe may be a long struggle against terrorists.

The final words in scene 158 of "Gods and Generals" -- the scene in which I appeared -- come from General Lee. After hearing from his advisors about the preparations and planning for the upcoming battle, General Lee commends them and says, "The rest is in God's Hands." We can say the same today. We are making preparations and planning for the future. The rest is in God's Hands.

As written in Psalm 127: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

December 26, 2001



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Preserving the Legacy of Our Veterans

West Virginians have a long history of distinguished service to their country in times of war and national crisis. From the first mountaineers who raised their muskets in defense of their new homeland to those Mountain State residents who currently battle the scourge of terrorism in the mountains of Afghanistan, West Virginia's men and women in uniform have made their state and nation proud. Through the years, the brave acts of these soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines have been remembered and honored by their fellow West Virginians.

One such remembrance, the Kimball War Memorial in McDowell County, is a unique tribute to the 400,000 black Americans who served their nation during the first World War. The war memorial, the first of its kind in the United States, was erected by the McDowell County Commission following a petition by veterans to honor black American patriots of that war. Hassle T. Hicks, one of Southern West Virginia's most prestigious architects, designed the monument building, which features four large columns.

For decades following its dedication on February 11, 1928, the Kimball War

Memorial also served as a community building, providing space for local celebrations and civic activities. But, in recent years, the memorial has fallen into disrepair. Already a victim of the typical wear and tear of age and weather, the building was gutted by fire in 1991.

To help reverse this unfortunate situation and to preserve a lasting tribute to these veterans, I added \$700,000 to an appropriations bill that was signed into law late last year. These funds will help to restore the historic Kimball War Memorial, ensuring that the sacrifices of these members of our Armed Forces are never forgotten. The latest funding is in addition to the \$462,500 that I added to a bill in 1999 for the renovation work.

Reportedly, 1,500 black residents of McDowell County alone served in World War I. Their patriotic contributions to our state and to our nation will live on in a newly renovated Kimball War Memorial. It is my hope that the funding which I added for this worthwhile endeavor will help to preserve the war memorial as a constant reminder to future generations of the price of freedom and of the sacrifices made by West Virginia's veterans.

January 9, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Music Industry Out of Tune

One year ago, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) released the results of an investigation into the entertainment industry's marketing practices. The Commission found that entertainment companies aggressively marketed violence-ridden materials -- even those specifically rated for adults -- directly to young people.

In the year following that initial report, the FTC worked with entertainment companies and monitored their efforts to inject a measure of responsibility into youth-centered advertising plans. Specifically, the FTC examined whether the entertainment industry, despite the Commission's initial report, continued to advertise violent, R-rated movies, explicit-content labeled music, and mature-rated (M-rated) electronic games in popular teen media. The Commission examined whether the industry included rating information in its advertising and it also reviewed internal documents provided by nine entertainment companies, including marketing plans for certain adult-rated movies, music, and electronic games.

The FTC's follow-up study, which was released recently, reports some good news. The Commission found that the motion picture and video game manufacturers have made

progress when it comes to halting marketing practices that peddle inappropriate material to children. But, regrettably, the follow-up study also shows that the music industry has been sorely lacking in these efforts. The Commission's review of ad placements by the music industry found that "it has continued to advertise explicit-content recordings in most popular teen venues in all media."

Those in the entertainment industry who continue to market adult material to children need to clean up their act -- and they need to do it now. This investigation underscores the need for parents to be vigilant when it comes to their children's entertainment options. It also should send a signal to industry executives, a signal that causes them to implement significant reforms and to stop pushing violent material on our children.

Some in the entertainment industry may claim that they are simply providing the material that the public wants. But a line must be drawn when it comes to luring children toward these adult-oriented products. The issue of marketing standards, which can have a substantial impact on children, is too important for any entertainment executive to dismiss.

January 2, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Lessons from the Past, Wisdom for the Future

As Americans move forward and rebuild -- both physically and emotionally -- from the devastating terrorist attacks of September 11, a renewed sense of pride in our great nation has emerged. People have begun to reflect upon the ideals on which the United States was founded, and upon the unique individuals who helped to make the dream of America a reality.

America's heroes have been individuals born into wealth and into poverty, during wartime and in peace, in the largest of cities and in the smallest of rural hamlets. As a boy, I found strength and inspiration in the conviction and ideals of the great Americans of the past, men such as George Washington, James Madison, and Benjamin Franklin. These men were outspoken in their passion for independence and they risked their lives to ensure freedom for their new nation.

It seems that in recent years the popular definition of "hero" has changed for the worse. The Founding Fathers have been replaced in the imagination of America's youth by sports figures, rock-and-roll singers, and movie stars. Aspirations to serve have been replaced by shallow desires for quick and easy fame and fortune.

I fear that our schools have done little to curb this disturbing trend. Too often,

the study of the important figures from our past has been lumped in with other school subjects in a broad course called "social studies." To help correct this unfortunate situation, I successfully added provisions to both the education authorization and appropriation bills recently that should bolster the education of students about American history.

In the year 2000, I created the "Teaching American History" initiative with a \$50 million appropriation. In 2001, I strengthened that initiative with an additional \$100 million. This project seeks to deepen teachers' understanding of history so that they may impart this knowledge to their students. A West Virginia organization -- the Regional Education Service Agency III, which serves Boone, Clay, Kanawha, and Putnam counties -- was among the first in the nation to receive one of these history grants.

I am hopeful that West Virginia schools will continue to benefit from this much-needed effort to further students' education about, and appreciation for, this great land. At a time when terrorists have called into question the American way of life, it is important for our young people to learn about the people, places, and events that helped to create the greatest republic that the world has ever known: the United States of America.

January 16, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

From Brownfields to Greener Pastures

A byproduct of the industrial development that, through the years, helped to create millions of jobs across America has been a legacy of polluted industrial sites known as "brownfields." Throughout West Virginia, there are hundreds of these properties that could pose potential hazards to local residents and which serve as obstacles to economic development.

According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, more than 450,000 brownfields sites exist in rural and urban areas across the nation. These sites, if cleaned up and redeveloped, could provide new opportunities for manufacturing, housing, and parks and recreation. The nation's mayors estimate that brownfields redevelopment could create more than 587,000 jobs across the country, which would provide a boost to local communities struggling with recession.

To help breathe new life into these aging industrial sites and to provide the opportunity for an economic rebirth in so-called Rust Belt communities and beyond, I cosponsored legislation that would assist local leaders with the reclamation of brownfields. Cleaning up these areas can promote economic development and can help to return crucial dollars to local tax rolls.

The Brownfields Revitalization and Environmental Restoration Act, which passed Congress and recently was signed into law by the President, provides \$250 million a year over the next five years for assessment and clean-up grants for local governments, states, and Indian tribes. The bill also creates an economic development incentive by granting legal protections for three groups -- contiguous property owners, prospective purchasers, and innocent landowners. It also outlines the parameters by which the Environmental Protection Agency may reenter a site to protect health and safety and the environment.

This law is the result of years of work by many members of Congress who have been concerned with the negative effects of brownfields on our states and localities. By providing funds to help reclaim these polluted sites and to reduce liability concerns for those who would seek to purchase and redevelop these properties, this new law will serve as an incentive for economic development. Cleaning up hazardous industrial sites not only can lead to increased dollars flowing through the smallest of towns and the largest of cities, but also can provide for a cleaner, safer environment for those who call industrial communities home.

January 23, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Plugging Leaks in Immigration

The terrorist attacks of September 11 highlighted a number of gaping deficiencies in our homeland security, including serious loopholes in the U.S. immigration system that allowed terrorists to enter our country posing as students and tourists or, in some cases, by simply walking across an unpatrolled Canadian or Mexican border.

There are currently between 7 million and 13 million illegal aliens living in America. Six out of ten of these aliens crossed a U.S. border illegally and, therefore, were not subject to background checks by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) or the State Department to determine if they had a terrorist or criminal history.

Another immigration concern is the nation's inability to keep track of those foreign nationals who enter our country legally as students. More than 500,000 international students are registered at 15,000 universities, colleges, and vocational schools across America. Some of these are nuclear engineering scholars, biochemistry students, and even pilot trainees who have access to highly advanced technology, training, and information.

To counter these dangerous shortfalls in our border security, I successfully included provisions in a recently approved antiterrorism bill that would fill some of the holes in our border

security and tighten our immigration regulations. My amendment provides funds for the Justice Department to enact a tracking system that requires every university, college, and vocational school to submit the name, address, and enrollment status of international students who are in this country on these special visas. Without a monitoring system in place, there is nothing to prevent someone from entering the U.S. on a student visa and then simply disappearing.

My provisions also require the State Department to review how it issues visas and to take steps to end "consulate shopping" — a practice in which foreign nationals seek out a U.S. consulate that does not have stringent background checks. Consulate shopping allowed a terrorist who was involved in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing to obtain a visa from the U.S. consulate in Sudan after being denied a visa from the consulate in Egypt.

For too long, our lax immigration and border security regulations allowed foreign nationals to enter this country illegally or to disappear after arriving on student visas. These new antiterrorism measures should help to fill the cracks that enabled dangerous individuals to slip through our immigration system. I am hopeful that this new law can help to prevent future terrorist attacks.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Price of Peace

With American troops on the ground in Afghanistan, as an uneasy coalition of nations confronts an unprecedented war on terrorism, it is time for America to rethink its policy regarding financial aid to foreign countries.

September 11 was a wake-up call on many fronts. As a result of the terrorist attacks, we have made sweeping changes to our concept of national security. We are now aware that we live in an age of global instability, of disenfranchised and desperate peoples, and of widespread proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

And yet, in many ways, the major instrument of our foreign policy -- monetary aid -- reflects a distressing attitude of business-as-usual. If September 11 has taught us anything, it is that America must move away from using dollars to symbolize the strength of our relations with other countries, and instead focus our energies and our resources on a new foreign policy that complements and enhances our global war on terrorism.

Nowhere is this more true than in the Middle East, where renewed violence has brought Israel and the Palestinian Authority to the brink of open warfare. The U.S., like the rest of the world, has looked on this ceaseless carnage in horror.

We have wrung our hands in despair and have condemned the violence in the strongest terms. But we have not matched our words with any meaningful action.

Legislation was recently signed into law that this year provides \$5.1 billion in foreign assistance to Middle East nations, with the majority, \$2.7 billion and \$1.9 billion, heading to Israel and Egypt, respectively. It is as if nothing has changed since September 11. The money goes to these countries with virtually no questions asked. There is no requirement that either country exert itself to end the hostilities in the region in order to receive the funding. That is a missed opportunity on our part. By not using our foreign assistance as an instrument of pressure to bring about change, we are inadvertently helping to fuel the continued cycle of violence in the Middle East.

These are strong words, but we live in perilous times. As we have seen all too clearly, allowing hatred to rage unfettered in that volatile region places our own shores in jeopardy. Doling out astronomical sums of money with no strings attached is a recipe for disaster. We must use our foreign assistance dollars as an instrument of positive change or else end this international welfare program today.

February 6, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Pull the Plug on Foreign Energy Dependence

The United States has an enormous appetite for energy. Our homes, appliances, and cars consume an incredible amount of power. This hunger for energy has led to a great dependence on foreign oil -- a dependence that needs to be reduced.

One way to ensure a domestic power supply is to focus our efforts on developing new, cleaner, more efficient ways to burn our abundant fossil fuel resources.

The Senate soon will consider legislation that seeks to enact a comprehensive energy strategy for our country -- one aimed at creating new energy sources while also investing critical funds in utilizing our existing resources in an efficient, environmentally friendly fashion.

For West Virginia, this national energy strategy is of great importance. Our state is the leading producer of coal in the Eastern United States. Coal -- our most abundant fossil fuel -- is the source for 51 percent of our nation's electric power. Coal and its related industries employ more than 17,000 West Virginians.

In an effort to enhance the long-term viability of coal, I have included a \$2 billion authorization in energy legislation that would boost the development of clean coal technologies. In 1985, I launched the national Clean Coal Technology Program to help create cutting-edge ways to

burn coal while significantly reducing emissions of pollutants. These technologies -- many of which are being created in conjunction with the National Energy Technology Laboratory in Morgantown -- can help to reduce our country's dependence on foreign oil.

At the same time, the Senate legislation contains another provision that would create a national framework to address climate change. This proposal, which I authored with Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska, creates a comprehensive strategy, based on credible science and economics, to guide America in addressing climate change issues in its own backyard. My provision also establishes a major research effort to promote the development of advanced technologies that will help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. We must invest in cutting-edge technologies, such as those that capture and sequester greenhouse gases, and we must develop renewable technology that is practical and cost-effective.

The U.S. needs a national energy strategy that continues to utilize our vast energy resources and also improves their efficiency and protects the environment. I hope that the President will support our efforts and will work with the Senate to move our country much closer to energy independence.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Search for Lighthouses in the Skies

Pocahontas County is home to one of the world's premier astronomical research facilities -- the Robert C. Byrd Green Bank Telescope. This telescope and its neighboring observatory work to enhance our knowledge and understanding of the Milky Way galaxy and beyond.

Dedicated in the summer of 2000, the telescope is already leading the way in space research. Recently, scientists at the Byrd Telescope announced the discovery of three new pulsars that will help to unravel more of the mysteries of the universe. The recently discovered cluster of pulsars is 22,000 light years from Earth, near the center of the Milky Way Galaxy.

A pulsar is all that remains after a star suffers a massive explosion that removes most of its surface in a phenomenon called a supernova. Pulsars emit regular pulses of radio waves that act as a type of "celestial lighthouse." These waves -- which are intercepted by the Byrd Telescope -- may some day be used by space explorers as lighthouses to navigate our galaxy.

Scientists plan to study these pulsars so that they can gain greater insight into the galaxy's growth. And the fact that these pulsars were uncovered in a part of the sky that has already been studied extensively demonstrates how valuable the

Pocahontas County facility will be to that effort.

At the same time, work is underway to make the resources of the Byrd Telescope available to West Virginia students. Legislation recently signed into law included \$5 million that I added to complete construction of the planetarium and science center at the Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences in Charleston, as well as for related equipment to link the Clay Center to the Byrd Telescope. This funding will help to further the educational experience of young people interested in astronomy and the sciences. Connecting the telescope to the Clay Center will bring cutting-edge scientific knowledge directly to the young people of West Virginia, and will help to fulfill the center's mission to inspire learning through the exploration of the sciences and technology.

Providing our young people with a solid foundation of education in science and mathematics is crucial to the future of our state. By joining our students' classroom experience with the high-tech astronomical resources in place at the Byrd Telescope, we open doors to new opportunity and exploration for our young people. I hope that this unique collaboration will spark a greater interest in our students of the world around them, and help to create a brighter future for our state.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

True American Heroes

In the weeks and months that have followed September 11, we have witnessed dramatic acts of heroism in response to the terrorist attacks. We have listened to stories of the brave police officers, firemen, and emergency medical teams who were first to respond at the World Trade Center Towers and at the Pentagon. We have learned of the courageous acts of those passengers who battled with their hijackers in the skies above Pennsylvania and gave their lives to foil the terrorists' nefarious plans.

But there are also people who, through their everyday actions, are heroes. These quiet heroes do not often garner newspaper headlines. These heroes are from various walks of life. But, despite their differences, they share a similar motive for their actions, namely, to serve and sacrifice for others. Everyday heroes give of themselves to help make their communities better places to live. They lead our society to a greater good; these men and women speak to the better angels of our nature.

The works of these

everyday heroes remind me of the "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" by Thomas Gray: "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife their sober wishes never learned to stray; Along the cool sequestered vale of life they kept the noiseless tenor of their way."

To me, my old coal miner dad was a hero. He was a hero because of the example he set for me -- one of humility, dedication, strenuous toil, honesty, and constant love that he gave to me and to the noble woman who was his companion for 53 years. West Virginia is a better place because of heroes like him.

America has memorialized those heroes who lost their lives on September 11, and saluted those who survived. But we should not fail to recognize those heroes who work quietly, day in and day out, to improve the lot of their fellow citizens and whose quiet contributions lift the spirits of their neighbors and the quality of life in their communities. I thank them. They stand among the true heroes of West Virginia and our nation.

February 27, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Slim Down, Shape Up

A recent report by the U.S. Surgeon General highlighted what is quickly becoming a major health concern for Americans. Our society -- dominated by fast food, television, and sedentary behavior -- is rapidly becoming obese. Beyond just being overweight, obesity is a dangerous condition that carries with it other profound medical dangers, including, heart disease, hypertension, stroke, liver disease, certain cancers, and diabetes, among others.

In children, there is a strong correlation between obesity and time spent watching television. Some children watch as many as six hours of television each day. Children increasingly play computer and video games and surf the net. These hours of sedentary behavior, when combined with the prevalence of high-sugar, high-fat foods, are a dangerous combination.

The statistics are staggering. Each year, according to the U.S. Surgeon General, approximately 300,000 deaths across the nation are associated with being overweight and obese, and these conditions accounted for health-related costs of \$117 billion in the year 2000. Since 1980, obesity has doubled among adults and tripled among adolescents.

Unfortunately, in West Virginia, the prevalence of obesity has been among the highest in the country in 14 of the past 15 years. In fact,

the incidence of obesity in West Virginia has trended upward from 25.7 percent of the adult population in 1984 to the present high of 43 percent. We need to take steps to address this situation before it becomes a dangerous epidemic. We cannot ignore the health risks related to obesity.

In an effort to provide new resources in this effort, I recently added \$2 million to legislation to create a Center on Obesity at West Virginia University. This center will enable health care professionals and researchers to work with community groups, schools, and medical professionals to find innovative ways to prevent obesity and improve the nation's health. Center experts will have the skills and resources to help educate West Virginians about the dangers of obesity while assisting those who want to live a more healthy lifestyle.

These resources are only a part of the solution to obesity. Much of the effort needs to be made by individuals. West Virginians must not allow themselves or their children to be shaped by an environment of fast food temptations and electronic distractions that often foster unhealthy eating habits and sedentary behavior. I urge each Mountaineer to help reverse this dangerous health trend. Eat healthier. Exercise. Slim down, shape up, and break this cycle of obesity.

March 6, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Working for Middle East Peace

Over the course of the past weeks, peace in the Middle East has seemed very far off, as news reports almost daily account for more deaths among the Palestinian and Israeli citizens. Despite international calls for a cease fire, the violence only seems to escalate.

In an effort to see what hope there is for peace in that volatile region of the world, I recently met in my U.S. Capitol office with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. President Mubarak will be one of the key figures in any peace talks, with an ability to utilize his friendship with both the Israeli and Palestinian governments to broker what all sides hope will be a lasting end to the region's violence.

President Mubarak described very plainly what he sees as the gap in this area, namely, the lack of involvement by the United States. Several months ago, our government pulled out of efforts to create a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian leaders; now is the time to return to those negotiations.

An idea that I broached with President Mubarak is

one that ties American foreign assistance to Middle East nations with progress toward peace. Currently, the United States provides \$5.1 billion in foreign assistance to Israel and Egypt without a link to progress on peace. Both countries receive that funding, no questions asked and no strings attached. I think that the United States ought to use its financial assistance as an instrument of pressure to bring about peace in the Middle East. Not to apply such restrictions is a missed opportunity on our part.

Crafting a lasting peace between and among Middle Eastern groups is not a simple task. But, as I pointed out to President Mubarak, the status quo of sitting back and hoping that all sides will voluntarily put down their weapons has not worked. The United States ought to give serious consideration to the idea of attaching strings to our foreign assistance. As a nation, we should press every advantage that we have to break the cycle of violence that has gripped the Middle East for so long.

March 13, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Cultivating A New Farm Safety Net

As farmers have prepared for the planting season, the Senate has crafted a new farm policy to better reflect the needs of rural areas throughout the United States. The new farm bill, which the Senate recently approved, could not have been developed at a better time. Since Congress passed the last farm bill in 1996, farmers have seen prices drop each year and many rural communities have witnessed hard economic times. Without new legislation, such difficulties would only worsen.

In past years, farm policy has favored large corporate farms while smaller farms, like those throughout West Virginia, have struggled to compete. The new farm legislation would apply more balance to agricultural assistance. One key provision for West Virginia farmers is the expansion of assistance for producers who grow non-commodity crops -- crops like apples, peaches, and many of the vegetables that are grown in our state. Another key provision would include West Virginia dairy producers in the Northeast Dairy Market Loss Assistance Program, and ensure a more stable future for dairy producers.

In addition to assistance specifically for farmers and ranchers, the new farm bill also aims resources toward rural communities. Critical to West Virginia are the farm bill's conservation pro-

grams that would help the efforts of farmers and communities to be good stewards of the land. Expanded nutrition programs would help families when they face tough economic times. Rural development provisions would continue programs that develop water and sewer systems in areas where such systems do not yet exist but are so desperately needed.

At the same time, the government should plan for natural disasters, such as drought, that may threaten farm production and rural communities in the future. Forecasters are already warning of desperately dry fields and low water tables. With that in mind, Congress ought to make provisions that would speed help to communities hit by drought or other natural disasters instead of waiting until after the damage has been done.

Agriculture provides over \$1.3 trillion to the nation's economy, and accounts for 24 million jobs. Rural America comprises 80 percent of our nation's land mass and 20 percent of our population. Yet, rural America is hurting like never before. The new farm bill passed by the Senate would help farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. I hope that the House and Senate can quickly resolve any differences so that a new, stronger, and more balanced farm policy can take effect without delay.

March 20, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Understanding Homeland Defense Needs

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, it has been made evident that more needs to be done at the state and local levels to prepare for potential attacks. To begin to address those needs, last December I worked to craft the first significant federal investment in homeland defense. As a result, Congress approved \$8.3 billion to fund the most critical initial needs.

In the coming weeks, I will convene a series of hearings of the Senate Appropriations Committee to learn what progress is being made with the initial funding and to determine what steps should be taken next. The Appropriations Committee will hear from mayors and governors about the challenges they face in order to prepare for a variety of threats. We also will hear from those men and women who would be on the front lines in responding to any future terrorist attacks -- police officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, doctors, and nurses. The committee will listen to those who best understand the security needs of the nation's communities with one simple goal in mind, namely, to determine how best to protect against, and respond to, future terrorist attacks.

The Appropriations Committee then will meet with those men and

women in the federal government charged with implementing federal homeland security efforts. Through testimony from Administration experts and Cabinet secretaries to military officials, my committee will examine the Bush Administration's plans to coordinate efforts with state and local emergency response teams. Cooperation must exist on all levels if the United States is going to be truly prepared for future terrorist attacks.

We cannot protect ourselves if we focus on our vulnerabilities only after they have been exploited by terrorists. A focus on every aspect of our homeland defense is essential in order to reveal and repair every weakness that we may find.

We can take preemptive measures to combat terrorism on the home front with a health care system prepared to respond to bioterrorism, a safer food and water supply, more secure airports and railroads, stringent border security, and state and local law enforcement officials who are trained and prepared to handle a terrorist attack. These critical efforts will help to ensure that all Americans have confidence in their state and local emergency response preparedness should, God forbid, another attack occur on our shores.

March 27, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Bush Road Budget Detours Job Growth

Across West Virginia and throughout the nation, we have learned a simple lesson in economic growth: where there are four-lane, divided highways, there is job growth; where there are safe roads and bridges, communities grow and prosper.

Our transportation network of roads, runways, and railways has always been central to the health of our national economy. Yet, as I review President Bush's budget request for the Department of Transportation for the coming fiscal year, I am greatly disappointed by its lack of balance.

In its recently released budget request, the Bush Administration has slashed funds for road and highway construction by a whopping 27 percent. The reduction to the highway program, if enacted, would result in West Virginia's road and highway construction funds being cut from \$308 million this fiscal year to \$235 million in the coming fiscal year. Funds available for continued construction of the Appalachian Corridor Highway System in our state would drop from \$62 million to \$45 million. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials estimates that such a loss of funding would result in as many as 3,300

lost jobs in West Virginia.

Those cuts can be avoided. The Bush budget fails to take advantage of available funding within the Federal Highway Trust Fund -- dollars obtained from federal gas tax receipts -- which has an unspent balance of more than \$18 billion. The majority of this balance represents tax dollars that were paid by the traveling public at the gas pump but are not being utilized for highway construction or renovation. If there ever is a time to consider tapping a portion of this balance to keep our highway construction program moving forward, now is the time.

While the investment in highway construction throughout the country has risen in recent years, we have not yet begun to reverse the trends of road deterioration and worsening congestion. The federal government should be looking for ways to move the investment in highways forward, not backward.

The nation's economy is slowly moving out of recession. But by slashing road and highway construction, by jeopardizing the jobs of thousands of West Virginians, the Bush transportation budget is a massive pothole to progress.

April 3, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Celebrating West Virginia's Natural Beauty

This month, the nation will mark the 32nd anniversary of Earth Day — a day to renew our commitment to preserve the natural beauty of the world around us. In West Virginia, we have been blessed by the Creator with some of the most unique flora and fauna in the Eastern United States.

One of the largest and most diverse freshwater wetland areas in central and southern Appalachia is the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge in Tucker County. I secured the initial funding to create the Canaan Valley Refuge — the nation's 500th National Wildlife Refuge. Opened in August 1994, the Refuge is home to 40 different wetland and upland plant communities which support more than 580 species of plants. In turn, the diversity of plants and habitats support an equally varied wildlife of more than 290 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish.

Recently, First District Congressman Alan Mollohan and I joined to announce the expansion of this crown jewel of West Virginia. Utilizing \$16 million that I added to federal appropriations bills, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has acquired 12,000 acres of land adjacent to the Refuge from Allegheny Energy, Incorporated. This property transfer will expand one of our state's most beautiful trea-

tures. It will provide important new resources for the facility and broaden one of the nation's most diverse ecological communities.

Earth Day also provides an opportunity to celebrate other sites across our state that have a rich environmental heritage. I am proud to support these natural jewels with federal appropriations. Just last year, I added \$6.8 million for the expansion of the New River Gorge National Scenic River. These funds will help to make the visits of the tens of thousands of people from across the country who travel to the New River safer and more enjoyable. Further, funding I have added to appropriations bills in recent years has supported the Monongahela National Forest, which hosts some of the state's most visually dramatic and sensitive lands, like Seneca Rocks and the Cranberry Glades.

This Earth Day, as the nation once again renews its commitment to the preservation of the environment, West Virginians can be proud of the efforts we have undertaken to protect the grandeur and beauty of our state. We have proved that economic prosperity and environmental preservation can coexist. The challenge for the years ahead is to ensure that we sustain this delicate balance.

April 10, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

West Virginia a Leader in National Defense

At a time when U.S. troops are engaged in a fight against terrorism overseas, West Virginia's role as a leading supplier of cutting-edge defense products grows ever more critical. Manufacturers across our state make significant contributions to national security and to the economic health of West Virginia. West Virginians provide our nation's soldiers, sailors, and airmen with the tools they need to protect America's interests around the world, and I am proud to have supported these efforts through the appropriations process.

Aircraft equipped with parts produced in Harrison County currently are employed in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. The Bridgeport-based manufacturer, Aurora West Virginia, produces the tail sections and structural parts on the fuselage of the Global Hawk reconnaissance airplanes and fabricates full-scale models for Northrup Grumman, the prime contractor that provides Global Hawks for the Air Force. These unmanned planes are proving to be a valuable asset for American military efforts overseas.

The U.S. Navy-owned Allegany Ballistics Laboratory (ABL) in Mineral County has a long history of providing support for the U.S. Armed Forces. ABL is a major supplier of defense products, including warheads, rocket motors, and other vital military components, to the nation's mili-

tary services and to U.S. allies. I have added funds to appropriations bills to improve the ABL facility and to ensure the Laboratory's ability to compete in the high-tech environment of precision weaponry production. ABL now operates in four areas of excellence to support the U.S. military -- tactical propulsion, precision ordnance, missile defense, and composite structures -- all of which contribute to the superiority of the U.S. Armed Forces.

A new generation of Naval guns used to protect ships offshore soon will be developed at the Mason Technology Center in Mason County, scheduled to reopen this summer. The Combustion Light Gas Gun will be created and tested at the Center's advanced gun testing facilities. Mason Technology Center is on track to become a Center of Excellence for the development of advanced long range gun systems.

Our country's current military action and heightened focus on homeland security preparedness only strengthens the ever growing need to design and build advanced, innovative defense weaponry. I take great pride in West Virginia's thriving defense initiatives and will continue to work to provide the men and women of our country's Armed Forces with the technology, equipment, and training they need to successfully defend our nation.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

School Safety: Continuing the Search for Solutions

Three years ago, two students at Colorado's Columbine High School walked into their school carrying several fully loaded weapons and opened fire on their teachers and fellow students. They killed 13 students and a teacher before taking their own lives. Their actions sparked a renewed assessment of our own schools in an effort to prevent such tragedy from striking close to home.

To include many voices and ideas in this assessment, West Virginia University (WVU) President David Hardesty and I started a series of meetings and projects to identify and expand effective strategies for safe schools.

The first meeting, held on WVU's Morgantown campus in August 1999, brought together educators, specialists, lawmakers, police officers, parents, and the church community to focus on efforts already underway throughout the state to combat school violence and on further steps that must be taken to better protect our teachers and students from classroom violence.

That first event led to a Youth Summit, held in April 2000, which gave students throughout the state a voice in shaping initiatives that would be implemented in their schools. The summit provided an opportunity for these young people to express their opinions on important issues such as violence, drugs and alcohol, and the media's influence on their lives.

The specialists at WVU's Extension Service took the ideas generated at these sessions, shared them with educators, and developed several new strategies that target school violence and aggression. At the start of this school year, these pilot projects, which were initially funded through \$100,000 that I added to a federal appropriations bill in 2000, were implemented at 42 schools. The strategies include various character education programs and the School-wide Positive Behaviors Supports Program.

With almost a full year of program experience to evaluate, President Hardesty and I, together with the West Virginia Department of Education, soon will share the results of the pilot programs with teachers throughout the state. The WVU Extension Service will discuss the lessons learned so far and seek the advice of teachers as to how best to apply these strategies in the classroom.

The lesson of the Columbine tragedy three years ago was that school violence can happen anywhere at any time. Solving this problem is a shared responsibility, one that requires strengthening basic values, teaching children right from wrong, and instilling in them a respect for others. Coordinated efforts by schools, parents, and community organizations can lead to proactive, comprehensive approaches to classroom safety.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Bright Future for America's Energy Policy

Our nation's quality of life and economic well-being are tied to energy, and, in particular, to electricity. Electricity powers our computers, home appliances, factory equipment, and life-saving medical technologies. The majority of America's rapidly growing energy appetite is fed by coal -- the country's most abundant natural resource. That is why I am particularly proud of the fact that the Senate recently approved an energy policy that will help to ensure the long-term use of coal in a more efficient, environmentally sound manner.

One of the key provisions that I included in this legislation is an incentive for electric utilities to install clean coal technologies in their power systems. In 1985, I launched this effort with a \$750 million appropriation. Since then, more than \$5.5 billion has been invested in clean coal research by the federal government and private industry to develop innovative methods to use coal in more efficient and environmentally friendly ways. This investment has led to a new suite of technologies to help power plants meet tougher environmental standards.

However, moving these technologies from the laboratory to the marketplace can be very expensive. That is why I have supported the inclusion of tax incentives to encourage companies to install these cutting-edge innovations at new and exist-

ing facilities.

These technologies also can help to meet another challenge that we can no longer ignore, namely, global climate change. Climate change and energy policy are two sides of the same coin. Energy use creates the vast majority of man-made greenhouse gas emissions, which scientists have concluded are a chief contributor to the problem of climate change.

To address this problem, Republican Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska and I crafted a climate change strategy that not only meets today's needs but also can adapt to the environmental issues that the country faces in the coming decades. Our provision, which the Senate has approved, would invest \$4.75 billion in advanced technology research while also creating a structure within the federal government to move toward a long-term, comprehensive climate change plan.

For the United States to remain a global economic leader, we must address these important energy issues. Now is the time to come together and craft an intelligent, responsible, bipartisan energy policy. With the enactment of this legislation, the nation can take another step toward improved energy production and conservation. The journey is just beginning, but the future is bright for a truly comprehensive national energy policy.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Saluting Our Armed Forces

Since 1950, the United States has celebrated Armed Forces Day on the third Saturday of May to honor members of the military for their patriotic service to the nation. The celebration replaced separate Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force Days when the Armed Forces unified under one department, the Department of Defense.

This year, especially, we are obliged to pause and give thanks to those who proudly wear the uniforms of the United States military. America's fighting forces work hard every day to keep our nation strong and free. They leave family, home, and hearth behind in the dedicated pursuit of this mission, and they are prepared, like legions of heroes before them, to make the ultimate sacrifice. Congress will continue to work to ensure that our military has the resources needed to protect our interests around the globe.

At the same time, Members of Congress have the added responsibility to ensure that the lives of the nation's sons and daughters are not jeopardized needlessly. We must ask questions of those crafting plans for war. Without defined objectives and solid planning, the war could drift into a haphazard campaign

that does not attack effectively the core elements of the global terror network. We would do far better to hear clear explanations and detailed justifications in the war on terrorism.

We are a powerful country, but we cannot hope to eliminate terrorism from the world without other nations by our side. We are a rich country, but we can never spend our way into perfect national security. Our resources are finite and choices must be made. And there will always be forces and circumstances in the world which are unpredictable and beyond our control. But we can strive to be a wise nation — one that understands its extraordinary possibilities as well as its very real limitations on the global stage.

I applaud the men and women of America's Armed Forces. They are engaged in very difficult missions where tensions are high and dangers abound. As they always are, West Virginia's sons and daughters are on the front lines of this effort. I will give them my full support in the U.S. Senate. At the same time, I will continue to ask questions and seek information to ensure that their willingness to serve their country, and perhaps sacrifice their lives, is not in vain.

May 8, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Recovering from Floods

West Virginia once again suffered tragedy at the hand of Mother Nature as heavy rains prompted severe flooding in the southern part of the state. The damage has been so extreme that a federal disaster declaration has been declared for five counties, opening the door to financial assistance for residents and businesses. To apply for federal help, affected West Virginians should call 1-800-621-3362 or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY) for the hearing and speech impaired. The toll-free telephone numbers operate from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., seven days a week.

As West Virginians begin to put their lives back together, there may be unsavory individuals who will offer insincere help only to help themselves to the hard-earned money of unsuspecting people in need. Posing as skilled laborers, these scam artists promise to repair damage to homes and businesses, but never deliver on those promises. To guard against such scams, West Virginians should keep in mind the following smart consumer tips.

Check the contractor's background and reputation. Call the West Virginia Attorney General's Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-368-8808 to determine the contractor's complaint history.

Always ask for references. Contractors should be willing to provide names

and telephone numbers of previous customers.

Make sure the contractor is insured. Be sure the contractor has workers' compensation and disability insurance. The home or business owner could be liable for accidents if the contractor is not properly insured.

Ask for a written estimate. Make sure that the estimate includes all work to be done by the contractor.

Ask for a contract. It might be worthwhile to obtain legal advice before signing any contract.

Do not pay in advance. Hold all or a substantial portion of the payment until work is completed and approved.

Despite the all-too-familiar damage and deaths caused by the flooding, West Virginians have once again pulled through with the help of their own. I thank the thousands of National Guardsmen, firefighters, law enforcement officials, Red Cross volunteers, and State Office of Emergency Services personnel who have worked to save lives since the crisis began. I also commend the countless family members, friends, and neighbors who have come to the aid of their fellow citizens and shared burdens too great to bear alone. Thanks to these efforts, West Virginians are repairing, rebuilding, and renewing their hope for brighter days.

May 15, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Strengthening Our Defenses at Home

For many West Virginia residents, homeland security may seem like an obscure concept which does not bear upon their daily lives. Border security is an imminent concern for those states adjacent to Canada and Mexico. Port security is a critical issue for coastal states like Maryland, South Carolina, and Louisiana. But neither threat pertains directly to non-border, landlocked states like West Virginia.

However, a surprisingly high number of danger zones exist across the country. Therefore, each state has a vital interest in homeland security. That is why I have worked to ensure that the investments the government makes in homeland security result in substantial improvements in the security of all Americans.

In West Virginia, we have many areas that potential terrorists could perceive as vulnerable targets. For instance, chemical plants in Kanawha and Wood counties pose inviting opportunities for those who want to jeopardize lives. Attacks at the dams in Summers County or Nicholas County could cause significant loss of life and property. A plan to poison water systems anywhere in the state could endanger the health and lives of people who drink that water.

These statements may seem alarmist. But after listening to hours of testimony from terrorism experts and

Administration officials about vulnerabilities in our society, I believe these statements are simply pragmatic. We need to examine each vulnerability, assess potential threats and consequences, and take steps to protect against possible attacks.

To that end, the Senate soon will consider legislation that I have written to fund numerous homeland security initiatives. This legislation addresses many of the critical vulnerabilities throughout the country, from borders to airports to nuclear laboratories and power plants. The legislation takes immediate steps to bolster local police and fire departments. It provides critical funding to train and equip health professionals to detect and treat cases of biological, chemical, or nuclear attack. It provides funds for the Postal Service to protect postal workers and to purchase equipment to make our mail safer. By approving this package, the Senate can take immediate steps to protect Americans and to try to prevent future tragedies like the one we witnessed last September.

Despite West Virginia's distance from our nation's borders and ports, we should not close our eyes to the threat of terrorism. We should be actively involved in proactive, preventive efforts which can make a significant contribution to the safety of all West Virginians.

May 22, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Fast Track to Fewer Jobs

The Senate recently passed legislation to provide the President with trade promotion authority -- better known as 'fast-track authority' -- which allows the Administration to negotiate international trade agreements without input from Congress. I am disappointed by the outcome of the Senate's lengthy trade debate, during which I strongly advocated my position that Congress not relinquish its Constitutional right to amend trade agreements. This authority is vital to the protection of American jobs, which are being lost due to unfair trade practices allowed under current trade agreements.

Clearly, Congress should be able to debate, amend, and, if necessary, reject trade agreements if such agreements harm certain U.S. companies and workers. The goal of these trade agreements should be to help all American workers by raising their standard of living and improving the quality of their lives. Otherwise, there is no reason for the United States to agree to them. This seems obvious. Yet, past experience shows that many of these trade agreements simply pave the way for companies to leave the United States and go to foreign lands where labor is cheaper and industries do not have to comply with the environmental and safety standards

that exist in the United States.

West Virginia has been particularly hard hit by this new economic reality. The latest example is in Wood County, where Ames True Temper has announced plans to close one of its plants and layoff approximately 160 employees. Ames' parent company plans to move the Parkersburg operations to China, where raw materials and labor are cheaper and environmental standards are virtually non-existent. This is devastating news for the employees and their families who relied on these jobs to put food on the table and children through college.

For too many American industries and the people who work in them, so-called "free trade" has been nothing more than a long and frightening slide to financial disaster, and Congress, by simply going along with Administration trade deals, has been a willing contributor to that decline. For too long, Members of Congress have stood by and allowed the interests of the workers and certain industries in their states to be sacrificed upon the altar of the false promise of "free trade." The American people deserve better. That is why I will continue to fight to preserve the duties and responsibilities of Congress and to protect the best interests of America.

May 29, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Removing Rewards for Illegal Immigration

The United States is undergoing an unprecedented wave of immigration. Even at the peak of the last great wave of immigration in the early 20th century, the number of immigrants entering the country was only 850,000 per year, compared to at least 1.3 million immigrants who annually settle in the country today.

Illegal immigration is a driving force behind this wave. The Census Bureau recently estimated that there are as many as 8.7 million illegal aliens in the United States -- more than two times the number of illegals estimated in 1990. During the last decade, illegal immigration added between 6 million and 7 million people to the nation's population -- a net increase in the illegal population of about 500,000 immigrants per year.

While the United States is a generous nation when it comes to immigration, Americans are justifiably concerned about the current record levels of illegal immigration. Combined with our post-September 11 concerns about tracking who crosses our borders, this kind of population growth is placing tremendous strain on the infrastructure network, especially on education and health care systems.

Instead of cracking down on illegal immigration, President Bush has urged Congress to provide amnesty to those people who break the law. In doing so, the government effectively relinquishes control over those who cross the nation's borders. Moreover, such amnesty is not fair to those who abide by the rules and enter and remain in the country legally.

I find the President's amnesty proposals to be grossly irresponsible. That is why I blocked an amnesty provision from inclusion in border security legislation that recently was passed by Congress, and why "Americans for Better Immigration" recently honored me with an "A+" grade for my efforts to reduce illegal immigration.

The United States is a compassionate nation when it comes to immigration, but that does not mean that the nation should turn a blind eye to those people who illegally cross our borders. The federal government certainly should not encourage that kind of unlawful behavior with amnesty initiatives. Given the nation's financial constraints and heightened security concerns in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, we cannot afford to allow this dangerous practice to continue.

June 5, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protection Against Flooding

In recent years, the summer months have brought devastating rains to the mountains, resulting in lost lives and millions of dollars in property damage. Just a few weeks ago, heavy rains and flooding in Southern West Virginia took several lives, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency estimates that individual and public property damage will total at least \$38 million. Each summer, this loss of life and property has become the expectation rather than the exception.

Words cannot describe the tragic experiences of families who have watched their homes and belongings washed away time and time again by flood waters. We have seen mountain streams and peaceful rivers change character with amazing rapidity, rampaging through mountain valleys and nearby communities. The challenge for West Virginians is to develop an action plan that can help to prevent this destruction and save lives.

Utilizing \$1 million that I added to appropriations bills, Governor Bob Wise and other local, state, and federal officials have worked to draft the first-ever comprehensive flood strategy for West Virginia. To date, regional meetings have been held to gain a better understanding of the specific flood control and pre-

vention needs in communities across the state.

Later this summer, the task force charged with compiling the information and crafting the prevention strategy is expected to release its first report for public comment. This report will focus on Southern West Virginia -- the region that has been declared a federal disaster area three times in the past year. This initial framework will be adaptable for other regions of the state.

The dangerous cycle of flooding-recovery-flooding needs to be broken in a thorough, concerted manner. This new statewide strategy should offer the opportunity for local communities, in conjunction with state and federal partners, to take specific steps to save lives and protect property.

For too long, West Virginians living near rivers, creeks, and streams have shuddered at each forecast of heavy rain. Through the development and implementation of a statewide flood prevention plan, residents will be able to minimize some of the severe destruction we have experienced in West Virginia for so many years. By building on our experiences and learning from them, we can help to prevent such destructive forces from destroying homes and communities in the future.

June 12, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Quick Action to Fight Terrorism

Not for 137 years has this nation faced war within our borders. The Civil War was a turning point in our history. Now we are facing another turning point as the nation is challenged once again by war on our shores. Today's violence has roots in a cultural clash of worldwide proportions.

We know terrorists live among us. Yet, we do not know where they will strike or when.

With endless warnings in mind, and with a clear realization of our many homeland security gaps, the Senate approved legislation that I authored totaling \$31.5 billion that could help to prevent future tragedies like the one we witnessed last September.

The legislation fully funds the President's \$14 billion request for the military and \$5.5 billion for New York in response to the events of September 11. The legislation also contains \$8.3 billion for critical homeland security efforts.

Within the legislation, \$4.7 billion is directed to the Transportation Security Administration to tighten protections at our airports and seaports. More than \$1 billion is directed to local first responders, including \$300 million for firefighters and \$174 million for police officers. The legislation includes \$723 million for the Coast Guard and

Customs Service to target and inspect suspicious shipments before they reach U.S. ports. Another \$387 million would help to expand lab and medical capacity to respond to bioterrorism threats. And \$200 million would protect against "dirty bombs" by better securing our nuclear labs and material.

Anthrax. Dirty bombs. Border security. Nuclear labs and power plants. Cybersecurity. Food safety. Airport security. Drinking water. We understand the gaps in our security structures. And if we know where those gaps exist, certainly the terrorists know as well.

Recently, the President announced a massive governmental reorganization to respond to terrorist threats. I support a Department of Homeland Security. But that department alone will not protect Americans from terrorism. There are many details to be worked out and we cannot wait to address gaps in our nation's defenses while this new department is crafted. Terrorists will not wait to attack anew.

We cannot afford delay. The Senate has passed this critical legislation; now it requires the approval of the entire Congress. This bipartisan legislation must move quickly to bolster our weaknesses, address our shortfalls, and protect American lives.

June 19, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Recognizing a Special School

In the hills of Randolph County sits the smallest public school in West Virginia. At that school, students and teachers have aptly demonstrated that small cannot only be better, but also be among the best.

I recently traveled to Pickens School to deliver the commencement address to the three-person graduating class. I wanted these students to know that their achievements have not gone unnoticed. Just because one lives off of the beaten path does not mean that hard work should go unheralded.

Pickens School is one of only five high schools in West Virginia to which the state awarded "exemplary" status last year based on attendance, Stanford Achievement Test results, and writing scores. For six straight years, every graduate has gone on to college. While Pickens educates only about 1/10,000 of one percent of the students in West Virginia, two of 18 winners in this year's premier statewide writing contest are from this wonderful little school. What a roster of achievement!

But as important as the school's stellar academic feats, Pickens has no metal detectors, no armed guards patrolling the corridors, no graffiti on the walls, and no drug or alcohol problems. It is no coincidence that safety in schools often goes hand-in-hand with academic excellence. The small, rural

nature of Pickens School is, no doubt, a key factor in its success.

The graduating class is small, but its opportunities are immense. Who can fathom what greatness may lie ahead for these three young souls? One of the graduates may discover a cure for cancer or unlock a great mystery of our universe. The students at Pickens believe in themselves and strive toward bright futures because their school and their community have believed in them.

The quality of the education imparted to the youngsters who are fortunate enough to attend Pickens is due in large part to the excellent and committed teachers who devote their talents to the school. Good teachers should be the most important role models in the lives of students, but, unfortunately, they often do not receive the respect and acclaim that they so richly deserve.

If our country is to continue to have the cohesive society that we have traditionally enjoyed, our educational system must reinforce the basics that undergird our way of life: compassion, humility, and morality. This is the quality of life and learning taught to the gifted and successful students at Pickens School. "Good kids" and good students are no accident, and the incredible students at Pickens are both.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Keep Amtrak on Track

Congress created Amtrak, the nation's passenger rail service, in 1970, and coast-to-coast operations started a year later. In West Virginia, Amtrak stops in several communities including White Sulphur Springs, Montgomery, Charleston, Huntington, and Martinsburg. For many rural communities, Amtrak represents the only public transportation connection to the rest of the nation. But today that connection is in danger of being severed.

Because of growing financial pressures and accidents which have destroyed track and equipment, Amtrak needs an infusion of funding soon or else it faces bankruptcy. The Administration has taken a first step, agreeing to a \$100 million loan that will allow Amtrak to keep operating into early August. However, by forcing \$100 million in loans on the railroad, the Administration has made Amtrak's road to financial health an even longer one. Amtrak already carries nearly \$4 billion in debt. Congress ought to recognize this critical need and provide sufficient funding, both in the short-term and in coming years, to maximize the railroad's potential.

If Amtrak closes, the nation's transportation system will be thrown into chaos. All of Amtrak's

68,000 daily riders will be without service. Commuter railroads from east to west will be shut down. Thousands of vacation passengers who already have purchased Amtrak tickets will be left at the station.

Amtrak also plays a vital role in homeland security, providing a viable transportation alternative to highways and airways. To allow Amtrak to close its doors now, when the terrorist threats and attack warnings come almost daily, would be irresponsible.

To prevent any closing, I have proposed to include \$205 million in an appropriations bill that is in negotiations with the House of Representatives. That funding would allow Amtrak to repay its loan and keep trains running into October.

Last September, when the airline industry was shut down, Americans turned to Amtrak for transportation. Because of the continuing concern about air safety, Americans are turning to Amtrak in record numbers. At a time when the country is turning to Amtrak, the federal government ought not turn its back. We must find sufficient funding to keep the passenger rail system running. Amtrak needs emergency funding, and it needs this funding now.

July 3, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Defending the Pledge of Allegiance

In 1954, I was a young member of the House of Representatives from Raleigh County. On June 7 of that year, I cast a vote that I have been proud of ever since. I voted to include the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. No other current Member of Congress cast that vote, a distinction that I value.

This is one reason why a recent federal appeals court decision in California disturbs me so greatly. That court ruled the Pledge of Allegiance to be unconstitutional because the majority of the court claims that the words "under God" run counter to the intent of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

During my many years in office, I have heard critics attack the words "under God" as they exist in the Pledge of Allegiance. They have implied that the Founding Fathers were essentially "neutral" about religion. These individuals assert that America's fundamental origins are basically devoid of religious meaning, and that this was the intent of the Founding Fathers.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

I believe that the intent of the Framers was to keep the new government from endorsing or favoring one religion over another, but it was never to prohibit any voluntary expression of re-

ligious faith. Religious faith always has been a basic tenet of American life. This is evident throughout the history of our nation.

The First Amendment in particular is one of the greatest legacies of faith bequeathed by the Founding Fathers, but I believe it is one that is little understood and sometimes distorted -- as it was in the recent court decision. In 1791, Congress passed the first ten amendments to the Constitution, called the Bill of Rights. The First Amendment recognized the importance of religion in American life, stating that, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The purpose of this tenet was to allow religious faith to flourish, not to suppress it.

The connection between God and America is long established in the minds of most Americans. We should not erase that connection under the pretense of protecting the so-called constitutional rights of non-believers or atheists. I hope that this recent court decision is thrown out and that proper recognition is given to the history of our nation and to the role of faith in our society. The United States is, and always will be, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

July 10, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Ohio River Islands: A Natural Beauty

West Virginians take great pride in the many natural treasures across the state. The need to preserve these precious resources is more important now than ever as West Virginia's tourism industry grows and as the commercial traffic on our waterways increases.

One of those natural treasures is the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge. Headquartered in Parkersburg, this refuge was the first national wildlife refuge established in West Virginia. In 1989, I secured funds in an appropriations bill to create the refuge, and over the last 13 years, I have provided additional funds for the refuge's land acquisition and operating expenses. Most recently, I included \$1.1 million in an appropriations bill for construction of a much needed new headquarters and visitors station.

The refuge presently includes 21 islands and encompasses more than 3,200 acres of valuable fish and wildlife habitat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service eventually plans to acquire additional islands, for a potential total of 35, along a 400-mile stretch of the Ohio River between Pennsylvania and Kentucky.

Most of the refuge's islands are within West Virginia's segment of the river, stretching from the Northern Panhandle in Hancock County to south of Point Pleasant in Mason County. These jewels of na-

ture include a rich mosaic of bottomland hardwoods, wetlands, and life forms which are rare to the area, including migratory birds and freshwater mussels. The pink mucket mussel, a federally designated endangered species, is found among the islands along with at least 20 other species of plants and animals on the state's rare species list. Experts have long recognized the biological importance of the islands and recommended that they be protected and maintained in their natural state.

The refuge helps to preserve a declining ecosystem. Since the turn of the century, approximately 19 of the Ohio River islands have disappeared because of both environmental and man-made causes. That is one of the reasons why it is important to support this refuge. In addition to sustaining valuable wildlife, preservation of these islands will protect natural vistas and open areas for the recreational enjoyment of visitors. The islands are popular areas for nature study, hunting, fishing, camping, and boating.

Preserving wildlife in areas such as the Ohio River Islands Wildlife Refuge is an investment in future generations of West Virginians. It ensures that our children and grandchildren will have the opportunity to experience the immense beauty of their state and to learn the valuable lessons of nature's wonderland.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Affordable Medicines for Our Elderly Citizens

Thirty-seven years ago, in 1965, Congress created Medicare to serve as a health care safety net for Americans who, because of age or disability, did not have access to medical services. Since then, the health care industry has made giant strides in medical treatments and quality of care. At the same time, health care costs have increased significantly -- especially the cost of prescription medicines -- but Medicare has not kept pace. In fact, Medicare offers no prescription medicine coverage. The time has come to address this shortfall and to create a Medicare system that is more responsive to the needs of Americans.

Prescription medicines are one of the fastest growing sectors of the health care industry. According to the National Institute for Health Care Management, spending on these medicines jumped by 17 percent in 2001. The Congressional Budget Office projects that, over the next 10 years, drug costs for senior citizens alone are expected to total \$1.8 trillion. Such hikes threaten to make medications unaffordable for far too many Americans.

This harsh reality is why I have long supported legislative proposals to create a voluntary, universal Medicare prescription drug benefit. Congress should

craft an initiative that includes a co-payment system, modeled on the system used by many private insurance plans. A new initiative should also provide additional protections for low-income beneficiaries. Medicare beneficiaries should have the peace of mind that comes with understanding exactly what prescription medicine costs they would incur and what benefits they would receive.

In West Virginia, there are more than 335,000 Medicare beneficiaries, many of whom lack dependable, affordable coverage for prescription medicines. Many of these senior citizens live on fixed incomes and cannot afford these high priced, but very necessary, medicines. In the most unfortunate situations, seniors are forced to choose between paying for medicines that their doctors prescribe and paying for food and other basic needs. That should not be the case in the richest, most advanced nation in the world.

I hope that Congress will act to make Medicare more responsive to this unfortunate circumstance and craft a responsible, voluntary prescription medicine benefit. By doing so, Congress can help to improve the health of Americans and give peace of mind to millions of Medicare beneficiaries across the country.

July 24, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Childhood Reading: A Door to Lifetime Adventure

In West Virginia and across this nation, too many children have poor reading skills. The most recent national round of reading achievement tests showed that only 29 percent of West Virginia's fourth grade students were "proficient" readers. The state's eighth grade students scored even worse, with only 27 percent receiving a "proficient" score. This means that only slightly more than one in four West Virginia students preparing to enter high school can read at an adequate level to succeed in the classroom.

In an effort to encourage more children to read, I recently partnered with the national Public Broadcasting Service and West Virginia Public Broadcasting (WVPB) in a new public service campaign to promote child literacy. This campaign, called "Ready to Learn," is designed to encourage children and parents to read to each other. The public service announcement will air on WVPB stations in the coming weeks.

Reading with children is one of the easiest and most enjoyable ways that parents can help to build the foundation in their children for a lifetime of learning. If children master reading skills at an early age, studies show that it significantly

increases their chances for later academic success.

WVPB has made childhood reading a priority in its programming. The network's early childhood education outreach efforts provide valuable instruction and training for our state's students and teachers. In addition to specialized educational programming, WVPB has conducted reading workshops for nearly 600 kindergarten and first grade teachers and has trained more than 50 childcare providers to utilize public broadcasting programs to support childhood literacy. More than 50,000 children across West Virginia have been instructed by adults who received this training. The WVPB approach has been recognized as a model initiative for the rest of the nation.

Reading opens doors to great adventures. It can take children on a journey to the center of the earth or around the world in 80 days. Reading can transport one backward in time to ancient Rome or encourage one to dream about the future. Reading teaches; it illuminates; and it challenges. I hope that more parents will instill in their children a love for reading. It not only increases a child's classroom achievement, but it also leads to a lifetime of thrilling adventure.

July 31, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Roads to Economic Strength

The nation's infrastructure is the foundation of our economy. The country's roads, bridges, highways, airports and seaports, water and sewer systems -- these are core elements of a healthy, productive economy.

During my almost 50 years of service in Congress, I have focused on investing in the economic engine of infrastructure, believing that such investments not only improve the quality of life for those who directly benefit but also help to spur job growth and economic development. Whether in West Virginia or in any other state, a stronger infrastructure means a healthier, more productive economy.

That is why I found the Bush Administration's proposed budget for road construction and repair to be so baffling. The Administration is proposing a devastating \$8.6 billion cut in federal highway construction funding for the next fiscal year. According to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, that massive funding cut would result in more than 350,000 lost jobs across the country, including nearly 1,300 jobs in West Virginia.

Underfunding infrastructure investments and forcing hundreds of thousands of Americans off the job is a poor excuse for an economic assistance plan, but that is exactly what the

Administration's highway proposal would do. We have not yet begun to reverse the trends of accelerating road deterioration and worsening congestion. We should be looking for ways to move our investment in highways forward, not backward.

Recently, I won committee approval of legislation that rejects the Bush Administration proposal and, instead, advances investment in road construction. The Fiscal Year 2003 Transportation Appropriations bill restores the \$8.6 billion proposed cut and provides a total of \$31.8 billion for critical highway construction projects across the nation, thus funding backlogged repairs and upgrades while protecting hundreds of thousands of jobs. This transportation appropriations bill puts forward a responsible plan to invest in the nation's economic health.

At a time when there is great unease about the stock market and corporate financial misdeeds, it seems obvious to me that Congress should invest in initiatives that strengthen the economy instead of following Administration proposals that would accelerate its deterioration. This transportation appropriations bill will be good for the economy and for the safe travel of Americans in West Virginia and from coast to coast.

August 7, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Haste Makes Waste for New Department

As America battles terrorism around the world, the Bush Administration continues to push for the rapid creation of a new federal department tasked with protecting citizens within our borders. The President's plan would constitute the largest government reorganization since the creation of the Department of Defense in 1947. His plan would shift 170,000 employees from at least 22 different agencies, shoehorning these agencies, with their widely disparate missions, into a single unit.

For instance, the President's plan would shift the Customs Service into the new Department's Border and Transportation Security division. But the Customs Service has a broader mission than simply guarding our ports. The Customs Service also is tasked with ensuring the rapid transfer of goods from port to market. That part of its mission -- expediting commerce -- runs counter to its security responsibilities. These conflicts are not limited to Customs, nor will they be easy to rectify. Congress should take sufficient time and give these problems broader consideration. We should ensure that, when this new Department opens its doors, its various agencies have a seamless mission and will provide true protections for the American people.

No lawmaker wants to be seen as delaying efforts to protect the homeland. But, in trying to avoid be-

ing labeled as obstructionists, we must not ignore even the most basic questions about the proposal -- such as will a Homeland Security Department actually make Americans safer from terrorists?

While I support the concept of a new Department, I fear that, by acting in too great a haste, the country will be more vulnerable to terrorist attack, not less. It would be far easier for terrorists to exploit loopholes in our defenses because of the chaos that will reign in the domestic security agencies during such a massive shake-up. We need to do this job right, not rushed.

Already this fiscal year, Congress has taken significant steps to strengthen the nation's security, investing \$15 billion to protect Americans from another terrorist attack and to better respond should, God forbid, another attack occur. But we should not rush in the course of a few days to create a brand new department that will have ramifications for decades to come.

Homeland security is a serious matter involving the lives and livelihoods of millions of Americans. The Administration and Members of Congress ought not offer the American people a quick bureaucratic fix but, instead, should take the time to work thoughtfully and carefully on an effective and lasting plan for the protection of the nation.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Progress Toward Lower Prescription Costs

Because of the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs and because Medicare, which funds the health care for many senior citizens, does not provide a drug benefit, too many seniors must decide each month whether to pay for food and shelter or the life-sustaining medicine that their doctor has prescribed. That should not be the case in a country as advanced as ours.

The Senate recently approved legislation that takes a first step toward ensuring access to more affordable prescription medicines. While this legislation does not include the Medicare prescription drug benefit that I long have supported, it does provide the pharmaceutical industry with a desperately needed dose of competition.

The legislation would overhaul the laws governing the way prescription medicines are brought to market. Loopholes in current law allow brand-name drug companies to prevent less expensive generic drugs from reaching pharmacies, forcing seniors and other prescription drug users to pay top dollar for medications. This new legislation would close those loopholes.

For instance, since the patent laws were enacted, major drug companies have stifled low-cost competition with a host of tactics -- including filing frivolous patents on the color of a pill bottle and paying generic drug manufacturers not to sell their less expensive

drugs. By following such tactics, companies can charge high prices for their drugs while also delaying the arrival of less expensive alternatives for several years.

Drug companies should profit from their hard work and innovation but, once a patent expires, consumers should have the opportunity to save money by choosing cheaper generic versions of the medicines. The recently passed legislation would eliminate a number of the legal hurdles that major drug companies have utilized to keep the less expensive generic competition off the market.

For example, a drug provider charges \$115.80 for a 30-day supply of the heartburn medicine Prilosec, but the generic alternative costs only \$10.80. Similarly, Vioxx, prescribed to treat arthritis and joint pain, costs \$73.29 for a 30-day supply, while its generic version costs \$7.99. The savings for patients who are able to purchase generic versions of their medicines are substantial, while the profit motivation for major drug companies to keep these medicines from the market is obvious.

As advancements in medicines become available, it is important that they be affordable. By opening the pharmaceutical industry to greater competition, the Senate legislation begins to address the rising costs of prescription drugs that is cutting into the pocketbooks of many of West Virginia's 335,000 Medicare recipients.

August 21, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Helpful Hotlines

Due to the vast number of regulations and options affecting federal programs and services, West Virginians often have questions regarding specific problems or concerns. In response, the federal government has established a system of toll-free telephone numbers that can assist West Virginians in receiving answers to their questions. With the thought that it might be helpful, I am listing some of the most commonly requested numbers.

Auto Safety Hotline ----- 1-800-424-9393
CDC National AIDS Hotline ----- 1-800-342-2437
Consumer Product Safety Commission --- 1-800-638-2772
Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
 Cancer Hotline ----- 1-800-422-6237
DOT-Auto Safety Hotline ----- 1-888-327-4236
Eating Disorders ----- 1-800-931-2237
Energy Efficiency Clearinghouse ----- 1-800-290-8202
Federal Scholarship Information ----- 1-800-433-3243
Food & Safety Tips on Meat and Poultry - 1-800-535-4555
Hill-Burton Free Hospital Care Hotline --- 1-800-638-0742
Medicare Information ----- 1-800-633-4227
Narcotics Anonymous ----- 1-800-766-4442
National Domestic Violence Hotline ----- 1-800-799-7233
 Hearing Impaired ----- 1-800-787-3224
National Drug & Alcohol Treatment
 Referral Service (HHS) ----- 1-800-662-4357
National Flood Insurance Program ----- 1-800-427-4661
National Health Information Center ----- 1-800-336-4797
National Runaway Switchboard ----- 1-800-621-4000
 (For parents and runaways to leave messages)
Pesticide Emergency Information ----- 1-800-858-7378
Safe Drinking Water Hotline ----- 1-800-426-4792
Small Business Administration ----- 1-800-827-5722
Social Security Administration ----- 1-800-772-1213
Suicide - National "Hopeline" Network -- 1-800-784-2433
Veteran Benefits Information ----- 1-800-827-1000

August 28, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

First Responders Prepare for Terrorism Threats

With the realities of today's world, communities both large and small need to be prepared for the possibility of a terrorist attack. At the local level, the front line of counterterrorism efforts is composed of first responders -- the police officers, the firefighters, and the emergency medical personnel. As they have always been, the men and women who serve in these departments are constantly on the job, always prepared to fulfill their duty when their neighbors call for help. But the new threats of terrorism have forced these departments to refocus their training and restructure their budgets to respond to these threats.

In many cases, these departments rely on small fundraisers to pay for equipment and training. However, expanded missions and continuing threats are pushing the price of security too high for many rural communities to afford. That is why I have worked through my position as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee to provide funds for local first responders. In legislation this year, I have added \$610 million in emergency funds for local law enforcement and firefighters. These dollars are making an important difference in West Virginia and across the nation, assisting police and firefighters in their efforts

to prepare for the possibility of terrorism close to home.

In West Virginia, several fire departments already are benefiting from these funds. In fact, departments in 16 counties are sharing in more than \$1 million, and more grants will be announced in the coming weeks.

Terrorist incidents are primarily local events. The immediate response to the attacks at the World Trade Centers came from the police and firefighters in New York City. The immediate response to the attack at the Pentagon came from the first responders in the neighboring communities. These events bear out the critical need for well-prepared, well-equipped local emergency response teams. The ramifications of an ill-prepared local community, in today's world, are too large.

First responders likely will act alone in the initial critical moments of any emergency, no matter how large or small. In those moments, lives will be saved. But these first responders cannot be expected to fund the fight against terrorism with bake sales and bingo nights. That is why the support of the federal government, both in terms of funding and training, is so important for local police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Corridor Highways: Roads to Progress

In 1965, the Appalachian Regional Commission crafted a plan to build a network of roads to link interstate highways and to bring economic opportunities into the hills and hollows of the Appalachian states. I supported the creation of the Appalachian Regional Commission, I supported the creation of the Appalachian Corridor Highway System, and I have supported, and added hundreds of millions of dollars to, appropriations bills in order to promote the completion of that system of Appalachian highways.

Recently, Governor Bob Wise and I dedicated the latest sections of the Corridor system, opening the first miles of Corridor H east of Elkins. These miles in Randolph County and in Hardy County represent the first progress on Corridor H since 1990, and they bring West Virginia that much closer to an integrated system of safe, modern roads.

In 1947, when I served in the West Virginia House of Delegates, there were only four miles of divided four-lane highway throughout the entire state, and even these did not show up on a West Virginia road map. A Saturday Evening Post story in 1960 stated that West Virginia's highway system was "decades behind that of its neighbors." Those words were seared into my memory, and I have made

it a mission of mine to obtain funding to improve West Virginia's transportation network.

With the eight new miles of Corridor H, there are now more than 1,000 miles of divided four-lane highway throughout West Virginia. These new miles represent not just safety and efficiency. They are not just concrete ribbons connecting community to community. This road and highways like it are also seeds which feed prosperity and nourish a better life for all West Virginians. They provide jobs, link rural communities to hospitals and clinics, and promote tourism.

Much work is still to be done to complete the Corridor Highway system in West Virginia. The Corridor D bypass in Wood County is still under construction, and Corridor H will not be completed until 2010. But we are making progress.

I look forward to the completion of each mile of these roads because they provide a safer, more modern route for the West Virginians who live along it and for visitors who come to discover the beautiful scenery of our state. But also, and more personally, I look forward to their advancement because, upon completion, they will connect the nation to the heart of our state with four-lane roads that travel through -- not around -- West Virginia.

September 4, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Renewed Determination on Mine Safety

This summer, the nation was captivated by an amazing story of survival and determination. Nine miners managed to endure being trapped in a flooded Pennsylvania mine for nearly 72 hours until they were brought to safety by a crew of relentless rescue workers who were resolved to beat the odds. People from coast to coast watched events unfold until, thankfully, the last miner safely reached the surface.

Communities in West Virginia and across the nation know all too well these tense vigils. They know the dangers that accompany coal mining. There will always be tragedies that can neither be foreseen nor prevented. In fact, the Department of Labor reports that last year there were 43 coal mining fatalities nationwide, including 12 deaths in West Virginia. That is why it is so important to train miners in the best ways to handle potential life or death situations.

Recognizing the importance of mine safety, in 1969, I suggested that the federal government create a mine safety training facility to better prepare miners for the risks they face on a daily basis. In 1976, what is now known as the Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Academy opened in Beckley. Since its inception, I have obtained more than \$30 million for the

Beckley mining academy, which played a crucial role in the rescue in Pennsylvania.

Not only was the specialized rescue equipment used in Pennsylvania housed in Beckley, but many of the experts on the scene received their training from the Raleigh County facility. In fact, each year, the Mine Safety and Health Academy trains more than 3,000 men and women in mine rescue and survival techniques. The successful Pennsylvania rescue exemplifies how the proper training can bring a happy ending to even the most treacherous of situations.

Early in the 20th century, coal mining took the lives of 1,000 to 3,000 coal miners each year. In the year before the academy was established in Beckley, 155 coal miners were killed in work-related tragedies. While Americans can look back with justifiable pride over the accomplishments of the National Mine Health and Safety Academy over the past quarter-century, we must not become complacent. Instead, we must renew our determination to do even better in the years ahead. I am thankful for the many lives saved by the skills taught at the mine safety academy, and it is my hope that the academy will continue to do the good work for which it was originally created.

September 11, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

West Virginians' Voice in the Iraq Debate

In the coming days, Congress, the Bush Administration, and the entire nation will engage in the debate surrounding whether to commit American military forces to battle against Iraq. For a Member of Congress, there is no discussion more somber, no decision more critical as the decision whether to send the nation's sons and daughters to war. It is a decision which should never be left solely to an elite few in Washington. This decision should be studied and discussed by all Americans.

Every West Virginian should play a role in the national debate concerning whether our country should launch an unprovoked attack on Iraq. Consider the crucial questions. Does Saddam Hussein pose an imminent threat to the United States? Should the United States act alone? Should Congress grant the President authority to launch a preemptive attack on Iraq? What would be the repercussions around the globe? These and other questions are not simple to answer.

Without a solid foundation of knowledge upon which to analyze the serious issues involved, Americans will be buffeted this way and that way by spin doctors, by politicians seeking to follow the latest opinion polls, and by talk shows which often have an edito-

rial agenda. Americans should arm themselves with information so that they can cut through the fog, discern the truth, and recognize attempts at manipulation.

The American constitutional system of government has an inherent system of checks and balances which the Framers crafted to keep the American people free and to protect our liberties from being arbitrarily swept aside. The power of the purse, which resides with the Legislative Branch, is the ultimate check on an overreaching Executive and a prime guarantor of the people's freedoms. But there is another power which can serve as a check against abuses by overzealous government officials and that is the power of the informed citizenry -- a citizenry that is well equipped to judge truths from falsehoods. An informed citizenry is essential to preserving a republic such as ours.

This is a nation "of the people, by the people, and for the people." Never in our history has the role of a knowledgeable people been more important than in these turbulent days. An informed citizenry has to participate, ask questions, and demand answers and accountability. It is up to each American to do what he or she can do to provide the all-important check on power -- the wisdom of the people.

September 18, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Fuel for Innovation

During the last century, coal powered dynamic innovations in technology development, manufacturing, communications, and transportation. However, as the United States prospered, Americans have become more concerned about the environmental impacts of coal. In response, the federal government and private industry have forged a research partnership that is leading to more efficient, environmentally friendly methods to utilize coal for many decades to come.

Coal now competes with a diverse mix of energy sources. Rather than be supplanted by solar arrays or wind farms, coal has relied on new technologies to become increasingly cleaner and more efficient, producing only a small fraction of the emissions that it did just 25 years ago. Many of these new practices are designed and developed at the National Energy Technology Laboratory, based in Morgantown. The laboratory's scientists are lighting a path for a new era of energy use. In fact, the federal investment in clean coal technologies has led to 40 first-of-a-kind projects in 18 states, including an array of high-technology ideas that can spearhead a new era of clean, efficient power plants which will continue to burn the nation's abundant coal resources.

But this is not enough. The challenges facing fossil fuels in general and coal in particular are great. That is why, in the Senate, I have consistently sought new opportunities that can help to ensure a bright future for coal. As Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I secured \$150 million for new clean coal initiatives last year. I authored another measure that added nearly \$2 billion in tax incentives to assist in the deployment of clean coal technologies in the marketplace. The Senate adopted my proposal as part of a national energy strategy approved this summer.

Coal is a part of the shared heritage of West Virginia. Coal is the most abundant, affordable, and accessible fossil energy source in the United States. That is why I continue to work to fund programs that will allow for the production and consumption of cleaner coal.

America witnessed great advancements over the course of the 20th century, and the new century promises inventions that one can only dream about today. But one fact will remain constant during the coming decades, namely, coal will remain the cornerstone of the nation's energy strategy and will continue to power innovation and change.

October 2, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Awareness Saves Lives

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a time to encourage all women to take an active role in their health and well being. Knowledge is power and, in the case of breast cancer prevention, knowledge can save lives.

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death for women in the United States. In West Virginia, the American Cancer Society estimates that this year 1,500 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and nearly 300 women will die from the disease. Nationwide, one of every eight women will develop breast cancer in her lifetime. More than 39,600 women will lose their battle with the disease this year, while 203,500 will begin their fight.

Advancements in treatments and detection are giving women a better chance of surviving breast cancer and leading a happy, active life. But finding the disease early is the most important step to improving a woman's chance of long-term survival.

According to the American Cancer Society, the most effective way to detect breast cancer is through a combination of clinical breast exams, regular self-exams, and routine mammograms. A mammogram is a simple and fast procedure available at many of the clinics and hospitals across West Virginia. Women should consult with

their physicians to determine which method of detection is most appropriate for them.

For many years, I have supported increases in cancer research funding and the development of new facilities. The statewide breast and cervical cancer prevention, education, and screening project, launched in 1990 with funds I added to an appropriations bill, offers screenings to West Virginians who otherwise might not have access to such tests. I was also a cosponsor of a new law that allows Medicaid coverage for the treatment of low-income women diagnosed with breast and cervical cancer.

Scientists at the Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences Center, home of the Mary Babb Randolph Cancer Center at West Virginia University, are constantly searching for new cancer treatments. The Cancer Center is West Virginia's first statewide cancer research and treatment facility.

I hope that these efforts, combined with research underway across the country, will one day lead to a cure for cancer. But, until there is a cure, the battle against cancer must be waged in every home in West Virginia. Encourage loved ones to take the necessary steps to detect signs of the disease. Prevention and early detection are the keys to beating the odds.

October 9, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Elections Matter

Two years ago, the nation watched closely as the last votes were counted in the election for president. The race went down to the wire. At the end, with more than 105 million votes cast across the nation, the election came down to the results of a single state -- Florida. In that state, when the final ballots were counted, George W. Bush won by a mere 537 votes and thereby won the national election.

This November, candidates across the country will seek election to Congressional, state, and local offices. Whether the nation will witness another race as close as the last presidential contest remains to be seen. But what should be clear from that recent history is the importance of every single vote. By voting, a person plays an active role in the government. One plays a role in determining what policies will be debated and implemented. This is as true for a city council or a county school board election as it is true for the election of a Member of Congress. Each vote counts. Each vote makes a difference.

Unfortunately, in the last presidential election, only 60 percent of the registered voters in West Virginia took the time to vote. Nationally, 67 percent of the registered voters cast ballots. It is beyond disappointing that American citizens would fail to appreciate and exercise this important responsibility. Participation in elections is the central means by which the American people can influence the future of the nation.

These are critical times for our state and for our country. Issues involving war and peace, the economy, retirement benefits, health care, education, Social Security, Medicare, and so many others are at stake in this election. Participation is key. This election will set the agenda for the next two years at all levels of government.

West Virginia is a very patriotic state. Our state's residents have never flinched in the defense of our country. Let West Virginia also show the nation that true patriotism requires us to do our duty at the ballot box. On November 5, go to the polls and vote.

October 17, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Staying True to West Virginia Workers

The U.S. steel industry continues to falter beneath unprecedented economic strain. The industry's longevity hangs in the balance as companies struggle to keep their doors open and maintain precious jobs for American steelworkers. West Virginia's steelmakers have not been immune to these pressures. They have cut hundreds of jobs in an effort to remain solvent. That is why I have worked so hard to provide critical assistance to American steel producers to see them through this crisis.

For example, two years ago I championed a trade law called the Continued Dumping and Subsidy Offset Act that has been particularly important to U.S. steel and manufacturing companies. Under this law, more commonly known as the "Byrd Amendment," the U.S. Customs Service collects duties on products that have been unfairly subsidized or dumped in the American market. The duties assessed against the foreign products are then provided to U.S. companies to reimburse them for the costs associated with acquiring new equipment, implementing advanced technology, and providing workers' health and pension benefits.

Recently, the World Trade Organization (WTO) claimed that my initiative violates international trade agreements and wanted the

Byrd Amendment to be repealed. This ruling ignores the fact that the only reason that the Customs Service collects these fines is because foreign countries break the very trade agreements that they negotiated with the United States. Quite simply, if foreign nations would stop breaking trade agreements, then they would not be assessed fines.

The WTO's Byrd Amendment ruling is so clearly wrong that U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick personally has assured me that he is appealing the ruling and will fight it vigorously. Unless reversed on appeal, the WTO panel's ruling will undermine America's competitiveness and diminish the ability of U.S. companies to invest in their workers' futures.

For the next few years, America will be involved in international trade negotiations with more than 140 other WTO members. At the top of the American demands ought to be an insistence that our foreign trading partners operate without subsidies and without granting their own companies unfair advantages. Until they do, I will continue to back initiatives like the Byrd Amendment which help to provide some assistance to American companies that have suffered for too long because of unjust foreign trade practices.

October 23, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Teaming to Protect Communities

West Virginians are blessed to live in one of the safest states in the country, according to national crime statistics. That fact is a credit to West Virginia's citizens and law enforcement agencies which work together to prevent crime in our neighborhoods. Local police and private citizens team up to ensure that West Virginia's communities remain safe havens in which to work and play.

But protecting our populace is not an easy nor an inexpensive undertaking. Police forces struggle to fulfill their duty under tight budget constraints. That is why I have worked in the Senate to provide new resources for law enforcement. In various federal appropriations bills this year, I have included hundreds of millions of dollars to help train and equip police departments and other emergency responders as part of their expanded homeland security efforts.

Another key federal support for local law enforcement is the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant initiative. Established in 1994, COPS grants help to hire new officers, to purchase new equipment, and to develop school safety programs. In that same year, I authored legislation to establish the Violent Crime Reduction Trust Fund to guarantee that COPS and other crime-fighting initiatives receive federal funding. Most recently,

my Senate Appropriations Committee crafted legislation providing \$1 billion for the COPS program.

West Virginia police departments credit the COPS initiative for enabling them to implement innovative crimefighting strategies and to build strong partnerships between law enforcement officials and the communities which they protect. COPS grants allow police departments to tailor their crimefighting efforts to the specific needs of local communities.

Since its inception, the COPS initiative has invested nearly \$40 million in 165 West Virginia local and state law enforcement agencies. COPS grants have helped to hire more than 690 new police officers and sheriffs' deputies who are on the job protecting our homes and businesses. These grants also have provided funds to improve school safety in West Virginia schools. By empowering school districts to prevent crime, the COPS program helps to maintain schools as institutions dedicated to teaching and learning, and not as places where violence rules the day.

There is no single answer to the problem of crime. But strong partnerships between local law enforcement agencies and the communities that they serve are key. By working together, we can continue West Virginia's long tradition as one of the safest states in the nation.

October 30, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A National Crime-Fighting Tool in West Virginia

The Mountain State is home to one of the most advanced and most widely used law enforcement facilities in the nation. The Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Criminal Justice Information Services Division in Harrison County provides state-of-the-art identification and information services to local, state, federal, and international criminal justice communities. Through the Clarksburg complex, the FBI is working with state and local law enforcement agencies to make our communities safer places to live and work.

Criminal identification by means of fingerprints is one of the most potent factors in apprehending fugitives who might otherwise escape arrest and continue their criminal activities indefinitely. More than a decade ago, escape was much more likely because the FBI relied on an antiquated paper-based system of matching fingerprints with suspects. That system simply did not work in the modern age. The FBI had 32 million fingerprint cards on file -- enough that if stacked one on top of another would be 13 times as high as the Empire State Building. Matching by hand a local suspect's fingerprints with one of those cards was a daunting challenge that often resulted in the suspect going free before the FBI determined that the suspect was wanted in another jurisdiction.

When the FBI approached me about the problem, I added \$185 million to an appropriations bill to construct an ultramodern FBI complex. Since that time, I have obtained more than \$800 million for development of the computerization. The return on that investment is impressive. Today, when a local police department submits a set of fingerprints to the FBI, more than 94 percent of the time the FBI can utilize its new technology to determine, within two hours, if a suspect has a criminal history. That speed can make a big difference.

At the same time, because of this system, the FBI is solving what, up until now, have been unsolvable cases. Through its modern technologies, the FBI has been processing latent fingerprints taken at a crime scene and matching them to suspects with prior criminal records, finally providing closure to some victims and families who have been haunted by long unpunished crimes.

The Harrison County FBI Complex has helped to revolutionize the nation's crime-fighting effort. West Virginians can be proud of the fact that our state is home to a world-class initiative geared toward helping the entire nation to realize a better, safer quality of life.

November 6, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Telling the Story of West Virginia Veterans

West Virginians have never flinched when called to military service, always answering the call of their nation to duty. The experiences of these veterans are shared through tales of sacrifice and courage, of hardship and danger, of loss and survival. Their stories are the stories of veterans across the country.

The Library of Congress has undertaken the mission of preserving those stories for generations to come. Through its Veterans History Project, the Library is collecting the memories, accounts, and documents of war veterans and of those who served in support of them during World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf conflicts. This national collection of artifacts will be available for use by all Americans, including students, teachers, researchers, and other veterans.

The Veterans History Project is only possible with the help of others. Various organizations in West Virginia have agreed to partner with the Library of Congress to record veterans' stories. West Virginia University, the West Virginia National Guard, and Marshall University are among the organizations which are gathering veterans' histories in the Mountain State. A full list of partners is available on my Internet site, <http://byrd.senate.gov>, or on the Library of

Congress site, <http://www.loc.gov>. As more organizations join in this effort, those lists will be updated.

Across the country, there are more than 19 million veterans, including approximately 202,000 in West Virginia. Each has a unique story to tell of service to country. In just the short time since its creation, the Veterans History Project has started to amass a remarkable collection of interviews and documentary materials that spans much of the 20th century. The collection includes compelling accounts of wartime service from men and women representing many ranks, jobs, branches of service, and theaters of war. I encourage West Virginia veterans to contact one of the partner organizations and ensure that their stories and recollections are saved for posterity.

The nation's veterans have repeatedly risked life and limb to defend the values that Americans hold dear. Veterans can pass on the lessons that they have learned to a younger generation, thereby ensuring that their experiences will extend long into the future. The men and women who serve in the Armed Forces are nothing short of heroes who have helped to shape history. The fabric of our nation is made richer when the embodiment of history, our nation's veterans, share their knowledge.

November 13, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Giving Thanks for a Year of Blessings

Once again, Thanksgiving is upon us and West Virginians are preparing to give thanks to the Creator for His many blessings on our land. After the scares of last year and with the possibility of war looming ahead of us, the Thanksgiving feast, the epitome of family tradition, is more precious and appreciated than ever.

The nation, too, feels stronger. We are more aware of ourselves as citizens of one land rather than as an eclectic mix of communities with little connection to each other. This year, as a nation, we feared the sniper that stalked the national capital area. As a nation, we pulled for the miners trapped underground in Pennsylvania. As a nation, we follow the hunt for terrorists and mourn for the victims of terrorist acts committed around the world. The flags that have flown in yards nationwide since September 11, 2001, are still flying in our hearts.

Our military, with the National Guard and Reserve forces, is more unified this Thanksgiving. All are under the strain of extended deployments, but all are working together. I am thankful for their efforts and offer a prayer for each of the nation's men and women in uniform and their families. We ought to re-

member and be thankful for their efforts.

We also should remember the firemen, police, and lifesaving crews who have performed so heroically during the crises of the past year and more. People are alive today because of their efforts, and their future diligence may make the difference for all of us in the future.

At the first Thanksgiving, the settlers thanked Providence for seeing them through a difficult year. It is a daunting task, to carve a homestead out of the wilderness thousands of miles from anything familiar. Each log had to be cut with an axe, dragged to the site, and lifted by hand into place. Fields had to be cleared, planted, and tended, and game had to be hunted and cured, or there would be no food, let alone a Thanksgiving feast.

This year, we gather with our loved ones, each house a glowing lamp of civilization in an increasingly hostile world. But for a day, we can easily push our nagging fears aside and find comfort in the warm bonds of family affection. As we polish the silverware, set the table, and prepare and serve the delicious food, we should give thanks for life's greatest gift -- our families.

November 20, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Developing a New Industry in West Virginia

At a time when concerns about security are constantly growing, the Mountain State is poised to help lead the country in the development of cutting-edge technologies that help to make computer networks safer from cyberattack. These technologies, called biometrics, protect information as large as electronic military networks or as personalized as one's banking or medical records. Biometrics utilize characteristics that are unique to an individual -- such as the pattern of the iris of the eye or the shape of one's hand or face -- in order to verify the identity of that individual.

West Virginia's role in biometrics began four years ago when the Department of Defense (DoD) approached me with concerns that terrorist organizations and rogue nations were attempting to break into the Pentagon's electronic networks. DoD officials believed that biometrics could provide the necessary security to protect critical information from would-be attackers. Since then, I have included \$92 million in appropriations bills to test biometrics identification systems and to develop a prototype security network for the Defense Department.

As it moved ahead, the DoD looked to those running the nation's largest biometrics repository for guidance. At my request, DoD officials toured the FBI Complex in Harrison County, which houses thousands of fingerprints electronically, and saw first-

hand the expertise that already called West Virginia home. After the visit, the DoD decided to open an interim Biometrics Fusion Center in Harrison County in 2000 to test various security approaches. That center has performed so well that the Defense Department is considering various West Virginia locations for a permanent testing facility.

The biometrics effort is not limited to the Defense Department. Recently, I announced that West Virginia University and five other companies and non-profit organizations in the state have been selected to lend their high-tech expertise to the critical work underway at the Harrison County center. This work will contribute to the country's ability to defend its electronic and computer information -- ranging from national security secrets to electrical grids or to drinking water systems -- from cyberattack.

As new technologies develop, the Mountain State is well-positioned to help lead the way. With the Biometrics Fusion Center and the combined expertise of WVU and several West Virginia companies, the state is gaining significant momentum in this young field. Not long ago, biometrics was strictly the stuff of science fiction. But what some people can dream, others can invent. West Virginia has demonstrated the foresight to embrace this state-of-the-art technology and is well positioned to lead in its development.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Steer Clear of Drunk Driving

The holiday season is upon us, bringing many opportunities to celebrate with family and friends. While many of the memories of this season will be bright, for some West Virginians the holidays will be filled with the tragedy of a loved one killed by a drunk driver. It is a scene that is played out far too often across the country.

A recent report card by Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) found that, while alcohol-related traffic deaths dropped by 40 percent between 1980 and 1993, progress has stalled. In fact, during the past three years, the declining trend of drunk driving deaths has reversed course and climbed by five percent. Last year, 17,448 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes throughout the nation. In West Virginia in 2001, 36 percent of all traffic deaths were alcohol related. That translates to 135 lives that could have been saved in West Virginia -- if a driver had the sense not to drink before climbing behind the wheel of the car.

The holiday season is one of several higher-risk periods when people need

to be aware of the dangers of mixing alcohol with driving. Last year nationally, between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve, 2,053 people were killed in alcohol-related traffic crashes, representing 41.5 percent of the people killed in vehicle crashes during that period. Of all traffic deaths across the country during the New Year's holiday, more than half were alcohol-related.

The statistics are sobering. They should remind all of us of the dangers of drinking.

Throughout this special season, it is important to remember what is truly important: family and friends. This season of the spirit is a good time to be thankful for the blessings that the Creator has bestowed upon us. But the holidays are not an excuse to drink and drive. 'Tis the season to be jolly, not drunk.

I offer my deepest hope that, in these last days of 2002, West Virginians show thoughtful concern for themselves and for the safety of others before taking to the highways. Cork the wine bottle. Cap the beer. Celebrate the season, but celebrate it sober.

December 4, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Roads to Progress

In 1965, Congress adopted the Appalachian Regional Development Act which promised a network of highways to connect Appalachia to the rest of the nation's highway network and to the rest of the nation's economy. While the country has virtually completed the Interstate Highway System, the people of West Virginia and the rest of the 13-state Appalachian region are still waiting for the federal government to live up to its promise on Appalachian Corridor Highways. That system is 78 percent complete throughout the region but, in West Virginia, only 72 percent of the Appalachian Corridor Highway system is open to traffic.

In 1998, Congress passed the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). This legislation signaled a new day for Appalachian Corridor Highways. Because of a provision that I championed in that bill, TEA-21 took a great leap forward by authorizing direct contract authority from the Highway Trust Fund to the states for the construction of these roads. Until that point, funding for Corridor Highways had struggled with uncertain and inconsistent resources. By providing the states of Appalachia with a predictable source of construction funds, I reinvigorated efforts to honor the promise made to the people of the Appalachian region.

Soon, Congress will be-

gin debate on a new transportation bill. How this legislation is written will be key for West Virginia's future. This bill again will authorize funding for the Appalachian Corridor Highways. Congress, in concert with the Administration, needs to finally complete that highway system.

From the time they were first planned more than 35 years ago, Appalachian Corridor Highways have been recognized as essential pathways for prosperity in an economically challenged region. They provide for a freer flow of commerce which is essential to opening new opportunities to the people of Appalachia -- opportunities that have largely bypassed the region for decades. These four-lane highways also provide safer and more modern alternatives to what have been among the most dangerous roads throughout the state.

I have always believed that a modern, efficient highway network is one of West Virginia's most pressing needs and is necessary for promoting economic development and job creation in our state. While it will be extremely difficult to accomplish under this current national Administration, I will work in the coming months to provide sufficient funding for Appalachian Corridor highways and to ensure that West Virginians, who have been waiting for these better, safer roads, can begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Christmas Story

Today, Christmas is filled with deadlines, shopping lists, and Santa Claus. In the rush to wrap presents and decorate the tree, though, it is easy to lose sight of the real meaning of Christmas.

The focus on material gifts underscores the sad reality that, all too often in our nation today, what one has is more important than what one is.

In this holiday hustle and bustle, it is good to return to the Bible and remember the true meaning of Christmas. Luke, in his Gospel, writes:

"All went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

"And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keep-

ing watch over their flock by night.

"And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

This Christmas season, let us stop to ponder the true meaning of those simple and beautiful passages.

Let us appreciate anew the miracle of small children, the joy of family, and the peace that comes with closeness to one's God and kindness toward one's fellow men. Erma and I wish for you a safe, happy, and holy Christmas and New Year.

May God continue to bless this wonderful country and guide each of us toward a deeper sense of the spiritual in our lives.

December 18, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Welcome to a New Year

As West Virginians turn the page on another year, it is a good time to recall the memories of the past while also looking ahead with hopeful eyes to the future. Reflecting on the five decades that I have served West Virginia in Congress, I have seen the state grow in magnificent ways. We have witnessed a dramatic expansion in opportunities for our young people. We have created innovative energy technologies that are helping to power the world. We have developed new medicines that are curing and preventing previously untreatable illnesses. Yet, with all of the advancements and changes, West Virginians have never lost sight of the old values that make our state unique.

Today, faith resides in the West Virginia hills just as surely as it did when I was a youth living in her southern coal mining communities and in the hills of Mercer County. Faith is what has kept us going when hope has been in short supply. But it is hope that shapes our vision of the future, and drives us to achieve our dreams. The

Bible teaches us, "Remove not the ancient landmarks which thy fathers have set." I hope that West Virginians will continue to preserve and honor the old values that guided and sustained our fathers and mothers and more distant ancestors in their daily lives and in the life of our state from its earliest beginnings.

As we cross the threshold into a new year, I urge my fellow West Virginians to build their futures on the development of the human mind and the rock of the human spirit. I hope that more West Virginians will understand the necessity of education and the value of our schools. Our state's future in fields of business, industry, science, and medicine waits for bright West Virginia intellects to open doors to those fields.

I extend to everyone my best wishes for a happy and safe new year. With God's will, West Virginians will continue to cherish and strengthen the traditional values that have served us so well, while we continue to build our state and prepare to meet the challenges that surely await us in the months and years ahead.

December 25, 2002



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Innovation: Engine for Job Growth

When I was growing up in Southern West Virginia, there was no computer line running to our home. I literally had to crank the telephone hanging on the wall in order to call a friend down the road. Coal was king. For many West Virginians, the coal company owned the house, the local store, and the doctor's office. If one ran out of U.S. currency, company scrip paid for the groceries. When the coal company pulled out of a town, the town, often, disappeared, too.

Today, while West Virginia's economy still relies on coal and the state's other core industries, we are witnessing a transition to a high-tech economy.

For example, the Touchstone Research Laboratory in Triadelphia is making great strides in the development of new materials using West Virginia coal. Just recently, I announced that Touchstone and the U.S. Navy are developing new materials for the construction of ship bulkheads. Using a Touchstone product called carbon foam, which does not burn, the Navy is hoping to build safer, lighter, and less expensive ships. Touchstone, which started as a small business in the basement of a house in Wheeling, has developed into a cutting-edge research and development firm that is helping to create new economic oppor-

tunities in West Virginia.

HGO Technology is another example of success. HGO has been a part of Wheeling for 15 years. Today, the company has more than 60 employees who specialize in computer network engineering, consulting, and software development. The U.S. Census Bureau utilizes software developed by HGO to encode its data. As a result, software designed in West Virginia is tabulating and analyzing every one of the 275 million questionnaires that the Census Bureau collected in 2000. The company's expertise is also benefiting groups like the U.S. Air Force and NASA. HGO is applying local know-how and superior capabilities to streamline and improve vital government functions.

I look forward to continuing my efforts in the Senate to promote these and other innovative efforts. From unprecedented advances in medicine, to new manufacturing techniques, to breakthrough computer technologies, the nation is in the midst of a technological revolution, and West Virginia is helping to shape this revolution. The foundations that we build and the opportunities that we create certainly will provide benefits for us today. At the same time, these foundations will help to develop new industries and new economic possibilities for many decades to come.

January 1, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Pressing Ahead for Autism Research

A new federal study is raising the awareness of parents about an often misdiagnosed childhood illness. Autism is a mysterious disease that affects brain and nerve development. Autism and its related diseases are generally manifested in children in the first two years of life, severely impairing language and communication skills, and impeding social development. The cause of these illnesses has not been found. However, doctors are pressing forward aggressively not only to treat the symptoms but also to find a cure.

In a just-released study, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found a marked increase in the number of diagnosed cases of autism and related conditions in American children over the past two decades.

The CDC study found an incidence of 3.4 cases per 1,000 children, age three to ten. That result is ten times higher than rates from previous U.S. studies that measured the prevalence of children with autism and pervasive developmental disorders in the 1980's and early 1990's. Some of the increase is the result of expanded definitions of the disorder and better diagnosis, but the explanation for the rest of the increase is unknown.

The Mountain State is fortunate to be a national leader in autism treatment. The West Virginia Autism

Training Center, based at Marshall University, provides valuable services and training for sufferers and their families. The center's staff helps autistic individuals and their families to improve the quality of their lives. Since its inception in 1983, hundreds of families of autistic children have benefited from the center's efforts. In fact, the demand for services was so great that a satellite facility was established in Fairmont in 1997 and another just outside of Weirton last year. Now, autism treatments are much closer to home for families in Northern West Virginia.

I am proud to have played a small role in the success of this important center. Beginning in 1994, I championed Congressional approval of federal funds for the Training Center. Now, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognizes the center's commitment to the treatment of young people and, with my support, includes critical funding for the West Virginia facility in its annual budget.

By learning from the West Virginia Autism Training Center and investing in federally funded research initiatives throughout the country, we can begin better to understand the causes of autism, how to treat it effectively, and, with hope one day soon, how to prevent it.

January 8, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Sustaining the Steel Industry

The American steel industry continues to struggle beneath ongoing financial strain caused by unfair foreign trade practices. A special investigation by the International Trade Commission found that the domestic steel industry has been seriously injured by the dumping of cheap foreign steel into the U.S. market. As a result of that finding, the federal government, beginning last March, placed tariffs on imported steel in an effort to make American steel more competitive. I support this effort and have worked throughout my career to stand up for steelworkers in West Virginia and across the country. I will continue to speak out for steel, especially as the future of the industry hangs in the balance.

In 1999, I created the \$1 billion Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee initiative to provide domestic steelmakers with access to funds to help alleviate the financial damage caused by foreign steel dumping. This program provides short-term relief for U.S. companies in a vital sector of the national economy. The initiative needs to be fully funded to give steel companies the greatest flexibility possible to restructure their operations, improve their productivity, and sustain themselves amidst prolonged financial difficulties.

Despite the demonstrated need for the Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee program, President

Bush's most recent budget cut \$96 million from the initiative. If Congress rejects this short-sighted Administration proposal, which I hope it will, the President is expected to push for an even larger cut in next year's budget request. By advocating such cuts, the Administration ignores the needs of the country's steelworkers when they are most in need of support. While the Bush Administration provides lip-service support for steel in its rhetoric, its policies are far from friendly to the American steel industry and its workers.

Together with 16 other Senators, I recently wrote to the President to express strong opposition to these ill-timed cuts which would effectively gut the Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee program. Eliminating these guarantees would leave financially distressed steel companies with nowhere to turn and would contribute to the demise of steel communities in West Virginia and across the country.

At a time when the nation's economy is hurting, we should not walk away from an industry that employs tens of thousands of Americans. The steel loan guarantees, coupled with other federal efforts, are imperative to the nation's long-term economic health. I urge the Bush Administration to end its efforts to dismantle this critical initiative.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

America's Energy Future Begins in West Virginia

In Congress this year, one priority must be the completion of a comprehensive national energy strategy. This is critical for West Virginia, which is one of the nation's leading producers of fossil fuels, particularly coal and natural gas.

Because of political agendas, the chance to complete energy legislation evaporated last year. But the issues of America's energy independence and the realities of climate change, which invariably result from energy use, are too important to let wither on the vine of partisan intransigence.

A comprehensive energy plan requires an understanding that energy, economic, and environmental goals are not mutually exclusive. If the United States is to be more energy independent, we must intensify the use of domestic energy resources in an economically and environmentally sound manner.

As part of the new national energy plan, I proposed legislation last summer to ensure a key role for fossil fuels in an energy diverse future. My initiative contains a \$2 billion, ten-year clean coal technology demonstration program to help speed these enhancements from the laboratory to the marketplace. Finally, my proposal calls for clean-coal tax incentives which will help industries to install clean coal technologies around the country.

I also have authored an

initiative that would address the long-term challenge of climate change. Based on scientifically, technically, and economically sound principles, my plan would put in place a coordinated climate change strategy, including a renewed commitment to develop the next generation of innovative energy technologies. This effort would commit more than \$4 billion during the next decade to vastly expand American technologies that can help to reduce the threat of global climate change. The bipartisan package I authored also provides for the creation of an administrative structure within the federal government to coordinate and implement a national climate change strategy. While some people may still debate the science of climate change, the fundamentals are obvious. The world is warming, and the increasing appetite for energy is a key contributor.

As Congress resumes work on energy legislation, it is critically important for that legislation to be balanced. Only legislation that commits to critical research and development of new fossil fuel technologies and also commits to address the problem of climate change can begin to place America on the road to a sustainable and environmentally sound energy future. By utilizing a full range of energy resources, technologies, and ideas, that future is possible.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

New Resources to Counter Obesity

Obesity is a serious disease which concerns much more than outward appearances. Being severely overweight is both a health risk and a growing epidemic which threatens the lives of many Americans. Doctors report that obese Americans have a much greater chance to contract heart disease, diabetes, some cancers, hypertension, respiratory disease, arthritis, and a host of other medical ailments. But the risks associated with obesity can be decreased with innovative research and prevention programs, which soon will be easier to access in West Virginia where prevalence of the disease is particularly high.

Utilizing \$2 million that I added to a federal appropriations bill last year, a new Center for Healthy Communities is being established at West Virginia University (WVU). The center will work with community health professionals and researchers to initiate effective programs to fight obesity throughout the state. I also have pushed for increased federal funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's efforts to create nutrition and physical activity programs that address obesity and other chronic diseases. These efforts will help to meet an important national health objective for

the year 2010: namely, to reduce the prevalence of obesity among adults from its current 21 percent to 15 percent.

Meeting this target will have critical health benefits for Americans. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, approximately 300,000 premature deaths across the nation each year are associated with being overweight and obese. Furthermore, these conditions account for health-related costs of more than \$100 billion annually.

As a nation, we cannot ignore obesity-related health risks and repercussions. Americans must not allow themselves to be shaped by an environment of fast food temptations that often fosters unhealthy eating habits. It is essential that local communities promote regular physical activity and healthy eating. The experts and resources at WVU can help in this effort.

There is no quick fix cure for obesity. The WVU Center for Healthy Communities' programs will be an important tool for people in the Mountain State and across the nation who want to break the dangerous cycle of obesity. I hope that West Virginians will take advantage of these resources that are so close to home and begin to make permanent changes for healthier living.

January 29, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Unlocking the Future of High-Tech Security

West Virginia is poised to become a national center for the testing and development of high-tech security systems that promise to revolutionize the protection of computer and other electronic networks. The Department of Defense has selected Harrison County as the home for its permanent Biometrics Fusion Center (BFC) -- a move that is expected to bring 150 to 175 jobs to North Central West Virginia by the end of the year, infuse between \$18 million and \$20 million into the state's economy annually, and open the door for new private sector investments.

The BFC will provide the Defense Department with unmatched ability to test and evaluate biometric technologies. While there are many variations in the technologies, they all share the common practice of using a person's unique physical characteristics for identification purposes. The technologies record these characteristics, whether from a fingerprint or facial design or hand contour. Those characteristics are then stored and available for comparison and verification when a person seeks entry to a location or to a computer network.

A few years ago, this technology was the stuff of science fiction. But today, biometric technologies are on the leading edge of innovation. Not only can these technologies protect military information networks,

but they also can protect Americans' banking information, medical records, or any other material stored in a computer network. In fact, the International Biometric Industry Association predicts annual industry sales of \$2 billion by 2006.

In addition to the BFC, I have worked to develop other biometrics initiatives in the state including West Virginia University's (WVU) nationally unique Biometrics and Forensics Degree program and the FBI's fingerprint database in Clarksburg, which is the largest biometrics repository in the world. In addition, WVU and five other companies and non-profit organizations in the state have been selected to lend their high-tech expertise to the work underway at the Biometrics Fusion Center.

The decision by the Defense Department to house its primary testing facility in Harrison County, combined with these other initiatives, places the Mountain State at the forefront of the burgeoning biometrics industry. The BFC can serve as a potent magnet for West Virginia's growing high-tech sector.

Cutting-edge technologies are climbing the mountains and bridging the rivers that once were obstacles to new jobs and economic growth. I look forward to the completion of the Biometrics Fusion Center and to the new opportunities that surely will accompany it.

February 5, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Courageous Discoveries

Throughout the course of history, exploration has been a hallmark of mankind. Human beings have always wondered what is on the other side of the river, the mountains, the oceans, the stars.

It was that spirit of exploration that led George Mallory to climb Mount Everest. When asked why he wanted to climb that mountain, he responded, "Because it is there."

It was that sense of discovery that pushed John Glenn to orbit the Earth in Friendship 7 in 1962. After his voyage, the future Senator from Ohio said, "My flight was but one step."

It was that determination that led Neil Armstrong to take the first steps on the moon and say, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

Not all exploration is on such a grand scale. In 1953, Francis Crick and James Watson delved into the smallest of creations with the greatest of possible horizons. Crick and Watson discovered the molecular structure of DNA, the genetic structure that determines everything from the color of our eyes to the shape of our fingernails. In presenting the Nobel Prize to Crick, Watson, and another colleague, a professor of the Royal Caroline Institute said, "We can, through (your) discovery . . . see the

first glimpse of a new world."

The seven astronauts on the Space Shuttle Columbia shared this desire to glimpse a new world. Theirs was a desire to peel back the layers of the undiscovered, to see what lies beyond the moon, beyond the international space station, beyond the furthest reaches of our solar system. When orbiting Earth, those astronauts did not see a map with borders. They saw one world, and they gave their lives in an effort to advance the knowledge and ability of this world.

Back when Francis Crick, the DNA scientist, was a little boy, his parents bought him an encyclopedia. It was after reading this volume that Crick decided to become a scientist. But he told his mother that he worried that, by the time he grew up, everything would have been discovered. She replied, "Don't you worry. When you grow up, there will be plenty left for you to discover."

Each venture into space is another step toward discovery. Each scientific experiment is another step toward unlocking the secrets of our world. There will be obstacles in our path; advancement is never easy. But it is a journey that we must continue, for there is, as Mrs. Crick acknowledged, plenty left to discover.

February 12, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting Your Special Deliveries

More than a year has passed since the terrorist attacks and the anthrax tainted letters in the fall of 2001, yet many facets of our daily lives have not yet returned to normal. An endless stream of government-issued warnings continues to cause unease both at home and abroad.

Due to the high-alert environment, many activities in the nation's Capital continue to be subjected to increased security measures in an effort to better prepare for, and respond to, potential terrorist assaults. The police presence remains heightened at national monuments, and security at federal government buildings continues to be elevated.

Another such preventive step helps to ensure the safety of the mail which is sent to Members of Congress. Each piece of mail goes through an irradiation process which subjects items to intense heat in order to kill harmful toxins. While the process is critical to the safety of government officials, the unfortunate consequence is that some mail items are damaged by the high temperatures.

I encourage my constituents to be actively involved in the political process, and it is important that the mail sent to me arrives unharmed. Letters, in the main, are unaffected by the irradiation process and can be sent either to my Washington office or to my

Charleston office. Letters can also be faxed to 202-228-0002 (Washington) or to 304-343-7144 (Charleston). Another option for contacting me is my Internet page at <http://byrd.senate.gov>.

Mail consisting of more than a letter, such as packages with photographs, compact audio disks, or digital video disks, should be sent to my Charleston office. Please do not send the original copy of material, and never send anything that is irreplaceable.

My mailing address in the U.S. Capitol complex is 311 Hart Building, Washington, DC, 20510.

My mailing address in Charleston is 300 Virginia Street East, Suite 2630, Charleston, WV, 25301.

I have noted that some West Virginians are skeptical that their concerns ever reach my desk. Some have written, "I know that this letter will never be read by you," or, "This letter probably will not get past your secretary." Be assured that I place great importance on the letters and other correspondence that I receive from my fellow West Virginians. I endeavor to answer each letter promptly and address whatever issue or question is raised in the letter. While the security measures in place sometimes slow down the mail process, they are not a barrier to open lines of communication between my constituents and me.

February 19, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting the Promise to Retired Miners

In 1946, President Harry Truman and the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) struck a deal that opened the way for greater mechanization of coal mines in exchange for cradle-to-grave health care coverage for miners and their families. The deal created a health care fund paid for by a tax on coal mined by UMWA members. But gradually, as many coal companies ended operations, the fund's resources declined.

In response, the Congress, in 1992, approved the Coal Industry Retiree Health Benefit Act. Under this act, coal companies pay premiums into the Combined Benefit Fund (CBF). Those premiums are then used to pay the health benefits of retired miners and their dependents.

That 1992 Act also provides for transfers of interest accrued in the Abandoned Mine Land Fund (AML), as necessary, to cover the costs of so-called orphan miners. These are retired miners whose former employers have gone out of business and cannot pay their share of the cost of benefits to these retired miners.

But because of skyrocketing health care costs, adverse court decisions, and plummeting interest rates that sapped the CBF's resources, 50,000 beneficiaries across the country -- including 15,000 in West Virginia -- faced a potential

summer cutoff of their health benefits.

When I learned of this imminent health care crisis, I went to work to ensure that the promise of medical care made to these families in 1946 would remain unbroken. To that end, I included a provision in a new law that allows the transfer of an additional \$34 million in AML interest to the Combined Benefit Fund. The \$34 million will supplement the regular payment to the health care program in the fall. CBF trustees have indicated to me that this funding will protect benefits for the rest of the year.

My legislation is a short-term fix for a problem that requires a long-term solution -- the kind of solution that ensures that retired miners and their dependents will not have to worry from month to month whether their benefits will soon lapse. The responsibility for this solution rests with the authorizing committees of the House and the Senate, working together with the UMWA and the coal operators.

The men and women who receive this health care coverage helped to power the nation in the 20th century. Their work in dangerous, often deadly, conditions lit the lights, fueled the locomotives, and powered the factories that opened the doors to today's modern America. In return, they were promised lifetime health coverage. It is a promise that should be kept.

February 26, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Celebration of Discovery

This year marks the bicentennial commemoration of the travels of Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and their team, the "Corps of Discovery." Reflecting on the journey reminds us that discovery of the unknown is one of the most profound traits of the American people. During the coming months, West Virginians will have an opportunity to learn about these adventurers and the time that they spent in the Mountain State.

In 1803, President Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark on a historic expedition through the lands gained from the Louisiana Purchase in order to find a navigable water route from the eastern states to the Pacific Ocean. During the trip, the two men and their team traveled thousands of miles, experiencing lands, rivers, and people that no American had seen before.

West Virginia played an important role in the Corps of Discovery's success. The U.S. Armory at Harpers Ferry supplied weapons and equipment for this great expedition.

Captain Lewis stayed in Harpers Ferry from mid-March until mid-April of 1803. While there, he purchased fifteen muzzle-loading, flintlock, long-barreled rifles which were among the first designed for the U.S. Army. The expedition would depend on these firearms for hunting food and for self-defense. Lewis returned to Harpers Ferry in July to test the guns and col-

lect his supplies. During his subsequent travels on the Ohio River, Lewis stopped in Wellsburg, Wheeling, Parkersburg, Belleville, and several other West Virginia communities.

One Corps member returned to West Virginia after the expedition. Patrick Gass, one of the few men on the trip who could read and write, spent his later years in West Virginia and died in Wellsburg in 1870. His diary serves as a key record of the journey.

The Harpers Ferry National Historical Park has planned an extensive schedule of Lewis and Clark commemorative activities between March 28 and 30, 2003, featuring music, drama, living history displays, and the opening of the park's new permanent exhibit on Meriwether Lewis. The weekend also will showcase a national traveling exhibit, "Corps of Discovery II: 200 Years to the Future." The exhibit will tell the story of the expedition and its significance as part of our history. A complete list of commemorative events throughout the state can be found at the website <http://www.callwva.com/lewis-clark>.

I encourage West Virginians to learn about the Lewis and Clark expedition. Their journey led to the opening of the American West. More importantly, the lessons they learned can help the next generation of Americans to chart their own course through history.

March 5, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Road to a Stronger Economy

The foundation of a strong economy is a solid infrastructure. Through my service on the Senate Appropriations Committee, I have worked to fund improvements to West Virginia's infrastructure -- the roads and highways, the water and sewer systems -- with the goal of creating an environment that can support new jobs and opportunities. In an appropriations bill that recently became law, I continued these efforts.

Corridors H and D are the only unfinished Appalachian Corridor highways in West Virginia. Corridor H, when complete, will stretch from Weston almost to the Virginia state line. Corridor D will run from I-79 in Harrison County to the state line at Parkersburg. I added \$108 million to the legislation to advance construction of those highways.

U.S. 35 runs from Mason County to I-64 in Putnam County and is one of West Virginia's busiest yet most dangerous stretches of two-lane highway. Governor Wise wants to widen the highway to accommodate increased traffic and improve safety. To move this project forward, I added more than \$4.1 million to the legislation for upgrades.

In Southern West Virginia, residents anxiously await completion of three major projects -- the Coalfields Expressway, King Coal Highway, and Route 10. In a changing

economy, it is important to provide the crucial improvements that will allow the area to compete for new jobs and growth. That is why I added \$26 million to the appropriations bill for these roads.

In the Eastern Panhandle, similar anxiety has gripped residents fighting for the completion of Route Nine. For many years, I have worked to fund this project and I continued that effort this year, winning \$10 million to move this road closer to completion.

Overall, my efforts on this legislation will translate into more than \$379 million for highway and road construction throughout West Virginia. These dollars represent a significant boost for West Virginia's economy. For every \$10 million that is invested in highway and road building, not only is the safety of travelers improved, but also 420 people get jobs in construction and related fields. That means, for West Virginia, the construction dollars in this legislation will help to provide jobs to nearly 16,000 men and women.

Improved roads provide safer, more modern routes for the West Virginians who live along them and for visitors who come to discover the beautiful scenery of our state. I look forward to their advancement because, when complete, they will connect our state to the nation with four-lane roads that travel through -- not around -- West Virginia.

March 12, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Bracing for a Budget Battle

Each spring, the President unveils his budget proposal for the coming fiscal year, outlining the Administration's plan for each piece of government spending both at home and overseas. For West Virginia, this year's budget is filled with bad news.

Several proposals buried within the budget pose a direct threat to the financial security and quality of life of citizens in the Mountain State. Key economic development programs in the state are targeted for significant reductions or, in some cases, outright elimination.

For example, while the Administration has stated that it is a friend to American steelworkers, the Bush budget undercuts two initiatives that are critical to the financial health of the nation's steel companies.

The budget proposes to eliminate all funding for the Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee program, which I authored in 1999 to help alleviate the financial damage caused by foreign steel dumping. The proposal also calls for the repeal of the Byrd Amendment, which collects duties from foreign companies that commit unfair trade practices and then distributes those funds to U.S. companies which are most adversely affected.

The President cannot claim to support steel while pushing policies that would make ghost towns of steel communities.

The President's budget also cuts in half funding for the Appalachian Regional Commission, jeopardizing critical water, sewer, and other infrastructure projects. This effort to slash initiatives which boost economic growth in some of the nation's poorest areas is a far cry from the economic security that the President is so quick to trumpet. Instead of giving these areas a helping hand, the Bush budget gives them the back of the hand.

In addition, the President's budget cuts \$20 million from Clean Coal Technology initiatives and shaves \$14 million in salaries from the National Energy Technology Laboratory in Morgantown. During his campaign, Candidate George Bush traveled to West Virginia and pledged to commit \$2 billion over 10 years to the Clean Coal Technology program, yet President Bush has not made good on his promise. Rather, he proposes to gut the very initiatives that allow fuels to be utilized in an efficient and environmentally friendly manner.

In the coming weeks, Congress will debate the Administration's budget plan. Members will pour over the details and work to fix the holes in the Administration proposal. For my part, I will work to correct the shortfalls which most directly affect West Virginia and try to ensure that those federal initiatives that are so important to the Mountain State are protected.

March 19, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Primed for New Security Post

As military activity continues in Iraq, the concern about terrorist attacks on U.S. soil increases. If the nation's homeland security efforts are to have a real chance to protect citizens from harm, they need greater support from the federal government. As the top Democrat on the new Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, I will work to provide security forces with adequate resources to carry out their critical duties.

The subcommittee has the awesome responsibility of balancing the funding priorities for, among others, the nation's police, firemen, emergency medical personnel, border guards, and airport security teams. The subcommittee has the additional duty to conduct strong oversight of the new Department of Homeland Security and ensure that the plans the department is crafting will truly meet the protection needs of the American people.

Congress has a responsibility to protect the nation. It must focus on the country's many serious vulnerabilities and invest dollars where they are needed most. I have tried repeatedly to provide additional dollars for homeland security that would have helped to plug critical holes in our defenses. But my efforts have been thwarted by the Bush Administration.

If there is one lesson that we should have learned

from September 11, 2001, it is that Americans are vulnerable here at home. When it comes to protecting this nation, there should be no distinction between providing the necessary resources for troops overseas and for first responders at home. Sadly, the White House appears not to have learned that lesson. When it comes to fighting in distant lands, the Administration's attitude is spare no expense. But when it comes to fighting the war on American soil, the Administration prefers to shop in bargain basements.

All Americans, whether they live in rural communities or big cities, want to know that, if there is a terrorist attack close to their homes, local doctors and nurses are trained to treat the injured. Americans want to know that local firemen have the capabilities and equipment to handle a chemical or biological attack. Americans want to know that local police officers are trained in identifying and responding to the wide-ranging terrorist attacks that we could face.

This new appropriations post will provide me with the opportunity to continue to lead in the protection of Americans here at home. It is my hope that the new subcommittee will step up to the plate and work to invest the necessary dollars to keep our people safe.

March 26, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Keeping Amtrak Trains Running

While much has changed in America's modernized transportation network, one constant remains. A web of winding train tracks still connects the country from top to bottom, from coast to coast, from bustling metropolis to sprawling countryside. Amtrak, the nation's passenger rail service, provides dependable, economical travel. Amtrak's whistle sounds in several West Virginia communities, including White Sulphur Springs, Montgomery, Charleston, Huntington, and Martinsburg.

For too long, Congress and presidential administrations have set unrealistically high standards for Amtrak while providing terribly low funding. Amtrak is showing the wear and tear of its 33 years of operation and is suffering the effects of a beleaguered national economy. Despite \$1.2 billion which I was able to secure for Amtrak in last year's appropriations process, the cash-strapped rail service is in need of further investment from the federal government to sustain its long-term viability. Fortunately, that help is on the way.

The U.S. Senate recently adopted legislation that I authored to authorize an additional \$1.8 billion for Amtrak, a funding level that will ensure that the railroad keeps chugging throughout all of 2004. The Bush Ad-

ministration proposal only provided \$900 million for Amtrak, targeting the rail system for one of the largest funding cuts in the federal budget. The proposed cut would have bankrupted Amtrak, terminated the entire Amtrak rail system, and shut down commuter railroads that depend upon the continued operation of the rail service.

In addition to subsidizing the rail service's significant operating costs, the funding I obtained will allow Amtrak to make long-deferred capital investments to improve reliability and ensure the continuation of safe and timely rail service. These investments include the replacement of Amtrak's aging track infrastructure and the rehabilitation of a number of railroad bridges that are several decades old and in desperate need of renewal.

Amtrak is integral to the country's transportation network. For many rural communities, Amtrak represents the only public transportation connection to the rest of the nation. But without Congressional action, that connection is in danger of being severed. With continued support, Amtrak will have the time and opportunity to craft sound plans for the future. That is the best way to keep Amtrak on track for many years to come.

April 2, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Prescription for Health Care Disaster

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed a budget resolution that requires an estimated \$92 billion in cuts to Medicaid during the next ten years. Neither the Senate budget resolution nor the Administration budget includes any such cuts to Medicaid. These massive cuts in Medicaid funding, if enacted, would threaten the health care for millions of Americans, including approximately 300,000 West Virginians.

This is the worst possible time to enact such draconian cuts to Medicaid, a critical safety net program. States are currently facing the most severe budget crisis since World War II, and nearly every state has proposed or enacted cuts to its Medicaid program, including West Virginia. Any reduction in federal Medicaid funding would place millions of vulnerable Americans now receiving Medicaid in jeopardy of losing their health coverage. Federal funding reductions would force states to implement even deeper cuts by restricting eligibility, eliminating or reducing critical health benefits, and severely cutting or freezing reimbursement rates for health care providers. As a result, Medicaid funding cuts would add millions more to the ranks of the uninsured.

Medicaid was originally intended primarily for poor children and the disabled, but

most states, including West Virginia, have expanded it to include the families of the working poor or near-poor and elderly people who could not afford to fill in the gaps in their Medicare coverage. It is now the largest health insurance program in the country.

I recently sent a letter, along with several of my Senate colleagues, to the leaders of the Senate and House Budget Committees strongly urging them to reject the inclusion of any Medicaid cuts as part of the final budget resolution. It is unfortunate that Congress must divert attention to preventing mindless cuts to Medicaid when, instead, we should be focusing on ways to increase funding for this critical program. Legislation is needed to enhance federal funding levels for Medicaid to provide cash-strapped states with some fiscal relief and to shore up the health care safety net during this time of economic hardship.

I am deeply committed to ensuring access to needed health care for all West Virginians, and I am proud to have helped provide health care facilities and services throughout our state. In the coming weeks, I will continue to work to correct the budget shortfalls for Medicaid and other vital health care programs which most directly affect West Virginia.

April 9, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Training the Nation's Finest

First responders from across the nation are coming to West Virginia to prepare for catastrophe. Firefighters, police officers, emergency medical technicians, and members of the National Guard are among those who are receiving real-world counterterrorism training at the West Virginia Memorial Tunnel, now known as the Center for National Response (CNR).

The one-of-a-kind training facility is located near Standard in a tunnel that was once part of the old West Virginia Turnpike. Operated by the Department of Defense, the center served more than 3,000 first responders in the last year alone. Groups ranging from East Bank's fire department to elite units of the U.S. Marine Corps have trained at the facility. These groups return to their communities and share knowledge with their peers to help prepare an ever larger pool of safety personnel for potential attacks on American soil.

The CNR's success lies in the fact that it recreates a wide range of disaster scenarios that first responders could encounter, including hazardous materials, bomb blasts, radiological devices, and subway attacks. It utilizes true-to-life settings, complete with the sights, sounds, and chaos of terrorist attacks, to best train first responders for any possible attack.

I am pleased to have

contributed to the creation of the CNR, working closely with then-Congressman Bob Wise and Adjutant General Allen Tackett to launch this initiative. Even prior to September 11, 2001, West Virginia recognized that America was vulnerable to terrorist attack and began to plan and implement programs to better respond to emergency situations. Since the Center for National Response was launched, I have worked to obtain \$21.5 million to convert the Memorial Tunnel into this state-of-the-art counterterrorism facility. When joined with other key homeland security efforts in the Mountain State, notably the Virtual Medical Campus at West Virginia University and the National Guard's Camp Dawson Regional Training Institute in Preston County, Mountaineer leadership and know-how play critical roles in the defense of our homeland.

The tragedies in New York City and at the Pentagon proved the absolute importance of well-trained first responders. These men and women form the front line of defense here at home. The Center for National Response and its employees help to ensure that our police officers, firefighters, and other emergency responders are well prepared should, God forbid, another terrorist attack strike America.

April 16, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Presidential Threat to West Virginia Jobs

One of the most recognized West Virginia products is the Fiesta brand of kitchen and restaurant china. The unique Fiestaware is one of many products manufactured by the Homer Laughlin China Company in Hancock County. Founded in 1871, Homer Laughlin is the country's largest pottery manufacturer, employing more than 1,000 skilled workers at its 37-acre facility.

But today, those jobs are in jeopardy as the Bush Administration wants to eliminate long-standing safeguards provided to the American china industry against unfair foreign competitors. As part of ongoing international negotiations on trade agreements, the Bush Administration has put forward a "zero tariff" plan for imported restaurant china. The Bush plan would erase tariffs on imported restaurant china, opening the door to a potential flood of subsidized goods priced at less than their cost of production.

If accepted as part of the international negotiations, the Bush Administration proposal has the potential to destroy the U.S. restaurant china industry. Indeed, if the U.S. tariff scheme were adopted, it could wipe out the 1,000 jobs at Homer Laughlin and immediately affect the ability of other companies to attract and maintain employees.

Recently, I joined a bipartisan group of House and Senate lawmakers to write the President to state

our opposition to this "zero tariff" plan. The U.S. restaurant china industry is a prime example of a sector that anchors small communities. These companies, and the people they employ, have long been an integral part of our communities. We must continue to support them.

The President and his Administration provide a great deal of lip service to traditional American industries that have been threatened by unfair foreign trade practices. But this "zero tariff" plan would further threaten American jobs in the name of free trade. I hope that the President will rethink this proposal. Free trade should not carry the price of bankrupting entire American industries.

During the more than five decades that I have served West Virginia in Congress, I have seen one Administration after another trumpet trade plans as being good for America. The trouble with these trade plans is that they are based more on the needs of international relations rather than on the needs of working Americans.

Job losses here must not be the price paid to expand job opportunities elsewhere around the globe. I will continue to push so that future trade policies take into consideration the needs of West Virginia workers, and so that international corporate profit margins are not put ahead of working families.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Importance of Clean Drinking Water

Turn on the tap in the kitchen and look at the water that comes out. For most Americans, the water is clean and safe. But for far too many people, the water is dirty and filled with dangerous bacteria. In fact, according to studies conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), more than 16 million Americans lack access to safe drinking water. In 21st century America, safe and reliable drinking water should be a staple of everyday life -- not just a benefit of living in metropolitan areas.

The costs associated with ensuring a safe and secure supply of drinking water are staggering. The EPA has estimated that there will be a \$534 billion gap between the current spending and the projected needs for water and wastewater infrastructure during the next 20 years, if additional investments are not made. This troubling projection comes at a time when communities are already less able to meet their financial needs due to a sustained economic downturn.

Funding is desperately needed to keep the current systems in working order, and that is to say nothing of the need for new systems to reach those without drinking water service. By failing to make the proper investments

today in public utilities, we allow a multibillion dollar problem to snowball into a clean water crisis.

In my position as the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, I continue to work to secure federal funds to bring clean water to rural communities across West Virginia. In a recent appropriations bill, I provided nearly \$14.8 million for the final design and construction of a water supply reservoir in Southern Randolph County. The reservoir is expected to benefit residents in several Randolph County communities including Mill Creek, Huttonsville, Beverly, Daily, Mingo, Valley Head, and Elkins. This project will bring the promise of clean water closer to reality for at least 16,000 West Virginians. Yet, while this is an important milestone, there remains much work ahead.

Most Americans take safe drinking water for granted. Most Americans simply assume that, when they turn on the faucet, clean water will automatically flow out. The terrible truth is that, in the United States, the health of millions of men, women, and children is made vulnerable by their reliance on a possibly contaminated water supply. Safe drinking water is not merely an option. It is a necessity.

April 30, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Coal for America's Future

In the coming weeks, Congress is expected to move forward on a new national energy plan. At the core of this strategy should be the one energy source that is responsible for more than half of the electricity generated in the nation, namely, coal. While coal is the nation's most abundant natural energy resource, it is also one of the most controversial because of the pollutants that can be emitted when it is burned.

That is why it is so important to invest in new technologies that can allow coal to be utilized more efficiently and in a more environmentally friendly manner. In 1985, I started the federal Clean Coal Technology initiative with an amendment authorizing \$750 million for the program. Since then, the initiative has expanded through a joint public-private investment of more than \$6 billion. This research and investment has opened the door to a new generation of technologies that are beneficial for both coal and the environment.

I have recently introduced legislation that would build on this investment and help to spur a new generation of clean coal technologies. Specifically, my legislation authorizes \$2 billion over the next decade to speed advanced technologies from the laboratory to the marketplace. This

bipartisan bill also aims to improve air quality and the efficiency of the current fleet of coal-fired power plants by providing targeted tax incentives for the installation of these technologies at new and existing coal-fired facilities. Quite simply, this legislation will open the door to better power plants that produce more electricity with lower emissions and fewer pollutants.

In the wake of the military conflict in Iraq, concerns about our nation's current and future energy needs are on the minds of citizens across the country. By working to better meet America's demand for electricity, we help to secure the nation's economic and environmental future. My legislation will ensure that an abundant supply of clean coal will remain the cornerstone of the nation's energy strategy and will continue to power innovation and change.

Coal was integral in America's advancements in the 20th century. As Congress creates a new national energy policy, it is crucial to ensure that coal, burned in cleaner more efficient ways, is key to the nation's fuel diversity mix for the 21st century. By investing in this natural resource, future generations will be rewarded with cleaner, more versatile, and more efficient energy.

May 7, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting the Right to Know

As the nation moves forward in a concerted effort to prevent another terrorist attack here at home, it is important that we continue to protect the Constitutional rights and liberties that have served us so well for more than 200 years. One of these rights is the right to know what the government is doing.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) was enacted in 1966 and gives any person the right to request access to federal agency records or information. All agencies of the U.S. government are required to disclose records upon receiving a written request for them, except for those records that are protected by exemptions or exclusions.

When Congress last fall adopted legislation to create the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS), it also adopted a new exemption to FOIA, allowing private companies to hide information from the public as long as they voluntarily submit this information to the DHS. The exemption applies to any information about the facilities that make up our country's "critical infrastructure" -- such as privately operated power plants, bridges, dams, ports or chemical plants -- that could be targets of a terrorist attack.

The FOIA exemption that Congress enacted is too broad. It allows the Department of Homeland Security to cloak too many of its activities in secrecy. The current law does noth-

ing to encourage companies to address vulnerabilities, nor does it require the DHS to fix the problems. Potential dangers are effectively swept under the rug. To make a bad law even worse, the Department recently proposed new rules that would broaden the exemption even further.

To close these loopholes, I am cosponsoring legislation called the Restore Freedom of Information Act.

This legislation would exempt only records relevant to protecting private facilities, correcting the blanket protection given to industry for anything labeled "critical infrastructure information." The Restore FOIA bill would allow access to such information in order to hold companies accountable for wrongdoing or to protect the public. Simply, this legislation would prevent companies from using the label homeland security as a smokescreen to hide information from the American people.

Increased security concerns call for prudent changes to, not blanket exemptions in, the information available to the public. If the government is allowed to operate in secrecy, without scrutiny, then the people's liberties easily can be lost. We ought to strengthen the Freedom of Information Act, not undercut it. The American people ought to have access to information that directly impacts their freedoms and safety



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Woman for All Times

Many decades ago, I was a young boy growing up in the coalfields of Southern West Virginia. I attended Mark Twain High School in Raleigh County. It was in the halls of that school where I met my future wife, Erma Ora James.

She was not dazzled by my family's wealth; we had none. She was not swept away with our home; it was quite modest. Actually, what Erma saw in me then I still do not quite know. But on May 29, 1937 -- 66 years ago -- she became my wife.

Marriage is never easy. There are, from time to time, challenges and difficult moments. But it is how we respond to those moments that can strengthen a marriage and lead to a long and happy union.

Together, Erma and I have seen great changes in the world. We have experienced the highs and lows of family life -- the delight of two fine daughters growing up, marrying, and having children of their own; the tragedy of the loss of a grandson; the indescribable thrill of holding newborn great-granddaughters in our arms. For two hillbillies from Beckley, it has been a wild ride. I am glad that I

have shared it with Erma.

Erma has always been an equal partner in our marriage. Her domain is the home, where she rules as a benevolent dictator. When the duties of the Senate fill all my waking hours, she keeps the home fires burning. She took the lead in bringing up our two daughters, teaching them to be the fine women and mothers that they are. Without her help and support, I could not have put the level of effort into my Senate work that the people of West Virginia deserve and have come to expect. She proves the old adage: "Behind every successful man is a successful woman." Together, Erma and I are complete and whole, a total that is more than the sum of its parts.

To me, Erma is a priceless treasure, a multifaceted woman of great insight and wisdom, of humor and common sense, a fountain spring of serenity at which one can slake the thirst of a stressful day. As we celebrate our 66th wedding anniversary, I can only thank her that she has put up with me for so many years, and I thank the Creator for His guiding hand that has brought us to this glad day.

May 21, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting America with Smart Thinking

Whether through innovative first responder training techniques or specialized National Guard facilities, West Virginia has taken a leading role in the national effort to prevent or respond to terrorist attacks. Even before the traumatic events of September 11, 2001, West Virginians were engaged in critical homeland security training and prevention initiatives that benefit the entire country.

Now, a new chapter is being written, this one by NASA's National Technology Transfer Center (NTTC), based at Wheeling Jesuit University. The NTTC works to strengthen the competitiveness of U.S. industrial companies through identifying, developing, and commercializing marketable research and technologies. The experts at the center are working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to make the best technologies and products available to the emergency response community.

Because of that foundation, a partnership between a small Northern Panhandle company and the NTTC has the potential to provide the country's first responders with an affordable technology that can help to save lives. What began as a sketch on a napkin just six months ago has developed into a groundbreaking product which alerts first responders to potentially life-threatening hazardous environments. The "HazMat Smart-Strip" is a cost-effective warning badge which detects the presence of toxic chemicals

or other weapons of mass destruction in the air.

Before the Smart-Strip was developed, first responders' protective equipment did not provide immediate chemical detection capability, and the high cost of electronic monitoring equipment was too expensive for most emergency response services. But the Smart-Strip is both affordable and easy to use.

The \$15 strips, which work for 12 hours once activated, detect hazardous chemicals in eight of the most common toxin categories. The strips will enhance the security efforts of police and fire departments, emergency medical teams, hospital emergency rooms, military forces, and hazardous waste workers.

The HazMat badges are manufactured by Printech, a family-owned commercial printing business in Ohio County. Because orders for the revolutionary warning strips are pouring in from around the world, Printech has hired additional employees to help meet the great demand for the product. In addition, NTTC has started to assess several more products which West Virginia companies could help to develop.

West Virginia ingenuity is opening the door to a safer nation. Whether through the development of products like the HazMat Smart-Strip or through the unique first responder training programs already in place in Kanawha, Monongalia, or Preston counties, the Mountain State is an integral piece of the nation's homeland security network.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Contracting Away West Virginia Jobs

The Bush Administration is pursuing a plan to privatize at least 850,000 federal jobs. Such a policy, euphemistically referred to as "competitive sourcing," could mean severe cutbacks at federal facilities in West Virginia affecting more than 3,600 workers. The Administration's policies encourage unfair treatment of dedicated public servants, many of whom are being forced into early retirement or the prospect of reduced benefits and lower pay.

For example, a recent letter that I received from Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Computing Center employees in West Virginia, Tennessee, and Michigan expressed strong concern with a privatizing initiative at the computer facilities in these states. The Administration plans to cut 10 percent of the federal workers at these centers and downgrade 75 percent of the remaining employees.

While the new IRS Commissioner has stated that "competitive sourcing" is not an effort to cut the federal workforce but rather an effort to increase efficiencies for the taxpayer, I disagree. West Virginia's federal workers have proved to be efficient, hardworking public servants. Mountain State employees regularly exceed the standards that they are charged to meet, and their dedication and experience cannot be measured in dollars alone. Mandating that their jobs go to private

firms is not based on merit, but rather on politics.

Other federal agencies in West Virginia also have announced plans to turn over government jobs to for-profit companies. The FAA wants to contract out air traffic control in Elkins and other critical air safety jobs throughout the state. The Coast Guard is considering privatizing the National Vessel Documentation Center in Falling Waters. Even the General Services Administration is turning over care of federal facilities to private contractors.

My efforts to locate federal agencies and offices in West Virginia have been much like matchmaking -- matching the needs of the federal agencies with the attributes offered by West Virginia. When I have learned that federal agencies had particular needs, I have urged them to look at West Virginia and see if there might be a site that would meet their criteria. Our state provides fertile ground for the sound investment of taxpayer dollars.

By arbitrarily forcing agencies to downsize without regard to mission or accomplishment, the Bush Administration may spoil that investment and, in turn, cost the taxpayers more in the long term than would be saved in the short term. "Competitive sourcing" is nothing more than an ill-advised budgetary shell game in which the real losers are the American people.

June 4, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Flying Toward the Future

The West Virginia National Guard is among the best trained, best equipped Guard units in the country. The thousands of Mountaineers who give of their own time to be part of the National Guard are always ready to answer the call, whether in response to flooding or severe storms in West Virginia or in support of the active military around the world.

To stay on the leading edge, the West Virginia National Guard has undertaken a significant upgrade in its training and support. New readiness centers have been built throughout the state. Maintenance facilities have been modernized to keep the state's fleet of planes, helicopters, and trucks in top condition.

I have worked closely with Adjutant General Allen Tackett, the Guard's officers, and the enlisted men and women to move these new facilities from the planning stage to construction and completion. Through my positions on the Senate Appropriations and Armed Services committees, I have obtained millions of dollars required for these projects.

A major effort underway in Martinsburg will result in a new, demanding mission for the National Guard's 167th Airlift Wing. An extensive upgrade at that airbase will prepare the site

to house a fleet of 10 C-5 aircraft.

Recently, I won Senate authorization of nearly \$26 million for construction of new airport infrastructure, including a new control tower, for Martinsburg as part of this upgrade. This authorization is the first step toward a modernized Martinsburg airport. These renovations will ensure that the 167th Airlift Wing is ready and able to take on this expanded responsibility in the nation's security efforts.

When the work is completed, West Virginia will be home to one of the largest Air National Guard bases in the country. The upgrade will require more than \$200 million in construction and renovations at the airport. Once the C-5 fleet arrives, total personnel at the Airbase is expected to expand from the current 1,160 men and women to approximately 1,340, while the economic impact will increase from \$34 million to near \$50 million each year.

The men and women of the West Virginia National Guard are a vital part of our state. They truly live up to the motto, "Always Ready, Always There." At any hour of any day, the Guard is standing by, ready to help. We should be proud of their efforts, and continue to support them in the future.

June 11, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Improving Access to Mental Health Care

According to the National Mental Health Association, more than 54 million Americans suffer from a mental disorder in any given year but fewer than eight million seek treatment. These numbers paint a troubling picture. For far too many individuals, debilitating mental disorders go untreated because sufferers lack the financial means to obtain much needed care.

While individuals afflicted with physical ailments such as cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure can rely on health insurance to lighten the financial burden of their illnesses and speed their paths to wellness, those with mental disorders are often left to fend for themselves. Destructive stigmas are being eliminated as more people understand mental health issues, but health care policies are not keeping pace. Many private health insurance plans discriminate against mental health patients by imposing caps on doctor visits and hospital stays and charging higher co-payments and deductibles.

The country's health insurance system has neglected people who suffer from mental disorders for far too long. That is why I am cosponsoring legislation which would break down the barriers to mental health insurance coverage and allow patients to seek the medical help they need. The Mental

Health Equitable Treatment Act would ensure that mental health disorders receive the same insurance coverage as physical illnesses. The bill, which renews and improves upon a mental health parity bill enacted in 1996, calls for full parity for all categories of mental health conditions listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition.

Fears that parity would cause insurance premiums to skyrocket are unwarranted. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that this legislation would raise insurance rates by less than one percent, a cost that pales in comparison to the significant costs of untreated or mistreated mental illness, including lost work productivity, lost earnings due to illness, and social costs. Expanding health care access for mental health patients makes sense both medically and economically.

By allowing mental health suffers to obtain treatment when it is medically necessary, the legislation encourages early intervention, appropriate care to avoid relapse, and the opportunity for a healthy, happy life. The time has come to bring first-class health care to millions of Americans who have been second-class patients for too long.

June 18, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Caring for Gulf War Illness

Twelve years since the end of the first Persian Gulf War, many of its veterans are still deeply affected by the physical repercussions of their service. One in seven Gulf War veterans have reported suffering from undiagnosed illnesses. While this fact has largely disappeared from newspaper headlines, there remains a critical need to provide Gulf War Illness victims with proper medical care.

These veterans suffer from unexplained conditions characterized by a variety of symptoms including fatigue, joint pain, skin rash, and memory loss. Exposure to low levels of chemical agents ranks among the most common theories to explain the mysterious illnesses. Following the war, U.S. and British troops destroyed chemical weapons in Iraq using large amounts of explosives, releasing huge clouds of smoke and nerve agents which could be the source of veterans' unexplained sickness.

In 1998, I sponsored the Gulf War Veterans Act which opened the door to health care and compensation for veterans affected by Gulf War Illness. But the Departments of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) had to estimate how many veterans may have been affected by the destruction of chemical weapons. To do that, the departments constructed computer

models of the toxic plumes and determined that as many as 100,000 soldiers might have been exposed to the dangerous chemicals. I and other Members of Congress questioned that estimate and requested a General Accounting Office (GAO) review of the studies to find out whether the models were right or whether they fell far short of the mark.

The results of the GAO study are, in one word, shocking. The GAO found that the computer models have no solid basis in fact. It is increasingly clear that several hundred thousand troops may have been exposed to low levels of chemical warfare agents. But, despite the unreliability of the models, they are still used to judge whether a veteran of the 1991 war who suffers from an undiagnosed illness should have priority access to the VA health care system. I am deeply troubled that ailing veterans have been forced to wait for health care services based on these flawed models.

This glaring mistake must be corrected. Many veterans of the first Gulf War continue to live with illnesses that are attributable to their great service to their country, and they deserve access to adequate health care. This nation stands behind our troops when they take to battle; we also must support veterans who return home with injuries or illnesses.

June 25, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Simple Justice for Steel Workers

For several years, American steel companies, employees, and their families have stood against constant waves of unfair foreign trade practices. They have done their best to withstand pressure applied by foreign countries and companies to bend -- and sometimes break -- the very trade agreements that their governments signed with our own. I have worked to find ways to support Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel, Weirton Steel, Steel of West Virginia in Huntington, and the entire U.S. steel industry. But my efforts have been undercut by empty promises from President Bush's Administration.

In 1999, I created the \$1 billion Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee Program to provide U.S. steelmakers with access to funds to overcome harm suffered as a result of unfair trade. That program serves as the lifeline to steel companies facing imminent financial difficulty. Today, however, the Bush Administration is threatening to cut that lifeline by eliminating all funds for this program and refusing to extend its authority. No federal loan guarantees means no access to capital for steel companies that have nowhere else to turn.

In 2000, I wrote a law known as the "Byrd Amendment." Under this law, companies like Weirton Steel receive funds from duties imposed on imports found to be unfairly subsidized or

dumped in the U.S. market. This law simply encourages our foreign trading partners to play by the very rules that they negotiated with the United States. If they follow the rules, there is no negative consequence; but if they break the rules, then they must provide a remedy. Inconceivably, the Bush Administration is recommending that this law be taken off the books.

When George Bush was a candidate for President, he claimed that he recognized the value of West Virginia's steel companies and workers. Dick Cheney pledged that the Bush-Cheney ticket would always be a friend of West Virginia steelmakers, claiming, "We will never lie to you. If our trading partners violate trade laws, we will respond firmly and swiftly."

Now, three years later, West Virginia's steel companies are in serious trouble largely due to the unfair trade practices of our trading partners. But the Administration's reaction has been anything but swift and strong.

I and others have called on the Bush Administration to make good on its promises. Our effort has reached across party lines. But, to date, there has been no response. The silence has been deafening. I only hope that the President will fulfill the promises made to West Virginia's steel workers before it is too late.

July 4, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Prescription for a Modern Medicare Plan

Congress is in the midst of an important debate on Medicare -- a debate that will shape the health care choices of millions of seniors for years to come.

Today, 40 million Americans, including 335,000 West Virginians, rely on Medicare to help provide for their medical needs. With more than one-third of all Medicare beneficiaries lacking insurance for the cost of needed medications, finding affordable prescription drug coverage is a critical issue for our nation's seniors. Prescription drugs are an essential tool for treating and preventing many acute and chronic conditions, but Medicare fails to cover them on an outpatient basis.

In West Virginia, the average annual income of a Medicare beneficiary is a mere \$10,800. Too many seniors, especially those living on fixed incomes, are forced to choose each month between paying for food and shelter, or buying the essential medicines that their doctors have prescribed.

Legislation that recently passed the Senate is intended to address that problem, but falls miserably short. Instead of a comprehensive, voluntary Medicare prescription drug benefit, the Senate legislation would force Medicare beneficiaries to rely on a private, untried, untested, drug-only insurance market for their prescription drug coverage.

The Medicare plan, as it stands, does not provide

the real, guaranteed, defined benefit that seniors desperately need and does little to address the high cost of prescription drugs. Under this legislation, some seniors would still be forced to split pills to make medicines last longer. Older Americans would end up shortchanging their own health by foregoing medicines that their doctors have prescribed.

Congress should do better for our seniors. That is why I have supported an alternative to create a Medicare prescription drug benefit with no deductible, lower cost-sharing, and no gaps in coverage. My plan would have reduced drug costs by allowing Medicare to negotiate group purchasing agreements with pharmaceutical companies. This proposal would have allowed seniors to choose for themselves how to best meet their prescription drug needs -- either through a private plan drug benefit or one offered through traditional Medicare.

Medicare was designed to be a safety net for those who, because of age or disability, did not have access to traditional health insurance. When created, no one could foresee how the costs of medications would spiral over the years, nor was it apparent how integral prescription drugs would be to health care. The time has come to address this shortfall, and to create a Medicare system that is more responsive to the needs of America's seniors.

July 9, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Paycheck Fairness for Overtime Hours

For many West Virginians, a 40-hour workweek is just the beginning of their time on the job. These men and women from all walks of life work extra hours and, rightly, expect extra pay for their effort. But the Bush Administration is considering changes to overtime regulations that would take away those well-deserved dollars. The Administration plan would have people working more hours for less money.

The President's proposal would modify the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 which standardized the 40-hour workweek and guaranteed that many non-managerial employees would earn time and a half for extra hours worked. The Bush plan would eliminate overtime pay protections for as many as 8 million American workers who currently are eligible for overtime pay.

It is not just hourly workers in factories and restaurants who would be affected by the President's plan, but they are in a variety of fields -- computer engineers, paramedics, secretaries, grocery clerks, and delivery route drivers. These employees depend on overtime pay for housing, food, and health care.

Recently, I joined with 42 other Senators in contacting Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, urging that the Bush

Administration step back from its plan, and we are not alone. The Labor Department has been flooded with more than 75,000 letters debating the merits of the proposed overtime changes -- the most mail that the agency has received on any wage-and-hour topic in at least a decade. Even business groups, which have pressed for a revision of the overtime rules because they have lost millions of dollars in overtime lawsuits, have concerns with some of the rule changes.

American citizens work longer hours than ever before -- longer than in any other industrial nation. Protecting the 40-hour workweek is vital to balancing work responsibilities and family needs. It is certainly not family friendly to require employees to work more hours for less pay.

Since President Bush came into office, more than 3 million Americans have lost their jobs. More than 400,000 Americans are filing initial jobless claims each week. The nation's unemployment rate has jumped to its highest level in nearly nine years. And now, for those workers who still have jobs, the Bush Administration wants to cut their pay. The Administration would do better to find ways to put more people back to work.

July 16, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Working for New Opportunities in Appalachia

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) was created by Congress in 1965 to boost the quality of life in West Virginia and portions of 12 other states where mountains and isolation long have inhibited progress. I voted to create the ARC, and today, 38 years later, I have taken on the effort to ensure that the ARC continues to provide quality services to West Virginians.

The ARC is probably best known in West Virginia for the Corridor Highways that stretch throughout the Mountain State: Corridor G between Charleston and Logan and on into Kentucky; Corridor D between Parkersburg and Clarksburg; Corridor L from Sutton to Beckley; and Corridor H between Weston and, Elkins, and eventually, Wardensville. These Corridor Highways have brought with them new job opportunities while replacing some of the most dangerous two-lane roadways in West Virginia.

But highways are only part of the ARC mission. The commission also helps to fund education and workforce training programs, water and sewer system construction, small business start-ups and expansions, and development of health care resources. The ARC enables many of our most vulnerable citizens to pull themselves up by their own boot straps.

Since the ARC was founded, the 13-state Appalachian region has made considerable progress in overcoming its isolation. Yet, the region still lags behind the nation in many respects. The cycle of poverty remains all too prevalent in Appalachia. Too many children go hungry. Too many families have no access to nearby health care. With the many challenges before us, there clearly is much work to be done by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Despite the overwhelming need, the Bush Administration has proposed to cut in half the non-highway budget for the ARC. If accepted, the Bush budget could set progress in Appalachia back by years. I do not intend for Congress to accept the Bush Administration's proposal. As a first step, I won unanimous approval from the Senate Appropriations Committee of my amendment to restore the ARC budget and provide \$71 million to the commission. The next step is for the full Senate to vote on the legislation.

The Appalachian Regional Commission's comprehensive and sustained effort is making a difference. But the job is not yet done. Congress should reject the Administration's shortsighted budget proposal and keep progress in Appalachia moving forward.

July 23, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Rewarding Classroom Excellence

When I was a student at Raleigh County's Mark Twain High School in the 1930's, a commitment to academic excellence was the standard, not an exception. My graduating class of 28 students had learned from some of the most dedicated and demanding teachers who I have ever known. Those teachers inspired me to study and to apply my best talents toward my school work.

That early encouragement placed me on a path that has led to a lifetime of learning, whether in the classrooms at Morris Harvey College or Marshall University, or among the tall stacks of books at the Library of Congress. Solon, one of the seven wise men of Greece, said, "I grow old in the pursuit of learning." That philosophy has inspired me to continue to study and develop my mind while also applauding those young people who have started on the same path of lifetime learning.

Not enough acknowledgment is given to the achievement of individual excellence in the classroom. That is why, in 1969, I started an annual tradition of presenting a certificate and a U.S. Savings Bond to

a valedictorian from every West Virginia high school.

This year, I had the honor of presenting bonds to 158 young men and women who excelled in the classroom. In the more than three decades since I launched the Scholastic Recognition Awards, 9,527 students have received more than \$221,000 worth of bonds from me because of their outstanding effort in the classroom.

Plato long ago wrote, "Excellent things are rare." Indeed, excellence is uncommon, and excellent acts, because of their remarkable nature and the effort they require, are entitled to respect and admiration. Each of these Scholastic Recognition Award winners has displayed academic excellence worthy of praise.

While the seed of intelligence may be planted at birth, it requires cultivation, care, and hard work to blossom into culture and wisdom. Together, the dedicated teacher and the eager student possess the magic to make brilliance. I applaud the valedictorians of West Virginia's Class of 2003, and wish them continued success in their pursuit of education in the years ahead.

July 30, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Improving Treatment of Citizen-Soldiers

Nearly each day of the ongoing military occupation in Iraq brings news of the death or injury of American soldiers. President Bush's May 1 declared end to major combat operations has not stopped the bloodshed. Thousands of West Virginia Guardsmen and Reservists still serve in Iraq and Afghanistan, and more could be called to serve in a growing number of international hot spots.

I have heard from many families anxious to know when their deployed loved ones might return home. All of these families expressed a deep frustration with the open-ended, unfocused deployment of Guard and Reserve units. After reviewing what some of these units have experienced, I understand the frustrations.

One West Virginia National Guard engineering unit, after shipping out in January 2003, advanced deep into Iraq with front-line fighting forces, bridging a river under heavy Iraqi fire. I have several reports that unit members are able to call home only once every several weeks, and that they now are only helping to haul Iraqi ammunition.

Another Guard unit has struggled through back-to-back-to-back deployments. This unit was mobilized for state duty in response to flooding in West Virginia in the summer of 2001. After September 11, 2001, this unit spent one year performing homeland se-

curity missions. Then, after a three month rest, the unit was sent to the Persian Gulf in February 2003, where it remains. There has been no word as to when this unit will return home.

While the nation's citizen-soldiers are proud to serve their country overseas, they also have obligations at home. These part-time soldiers are full-time doctors, firemen, policemen, and a host of other roles which are critical to the security of American communities.

I recently contacted Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to ask that he review and address the extended deployments, lack of well-defined missions, and reported rationing of basic supplies. Uncle Sam ought to better serve the interests of Guardsmen and Reservists who lay their lives on the line each time they are called to duty.

West Virginians have a proud tradition of service to America, and our troops should be commended for their courage and sacrifice. But National Guardsmen and Reservists also have important responsibilities to their families, their employers, and their communities. It is unreasonable to dip into the Guard and Reserves so frequently and expect them to serve with no indication of when their missions will end. We must do better to balance their commitments at home with their deployments overseas.

August 6, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Expanding West Virginia's Health Care Network

Across West Virginia, especially in our more rural areas, there is a serious shortage of doctors and a lack of access to quality medical care close to home. Too often, families must travel long distances to see a physician, and even farther if specialized care is required. That is why, throughout my career of public service, I have worked to expand the reach of our medical facilities.

Recently, I announced the release of \$10.8 million for construction of a new facility at Marshall University that will house a medical education center, primary and specialty care clinical services, and a new heart institute. I included the funding in federal appropriations legislation earlier this year. The new facility will be part of Marshall's Center for Rural Health, which provides medical services in more than half of West Virginia's 55 counties.

Marshall University has taken a leading role in providing health care services to Southern West Virginia. The funding that I obtained will allow the University to expand its efforts and improve the quality of life for many more West Virginians.

West Virginia University (WVU) also has taken on the challenge of improving health care in rural communities. WVU recognizes that the dire shortage of doctors

across the state forces many citizens to travel long distances, sometimes leaving the state, to obtain quality medical care. In an effort to address this dilemma, WVU has established a new Eastern Division of the Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences Center.

This new facility will combine an important medical teaching campus with community-based facilities in Harper's Ferry, Moorefield, and Ranson. The innovative medical campus will provide West Virginia with access to a network of new and existing health care facilities and services throughout the Eastern Panhandle.

I recently announced the release of nearly \$3 million to complete the final phase of construction of the Eastern Division's hub at City Hospital in Martinsburg. This funding builds on \$3.5 million that I secured in the year 2000 to begin construction of the central facility.

West Virginians are proud of their history, their heritage, and their mountains. But that same rugged, rural terrain has been an obstacle for access to quality health care close to home. I hope that my continuing efforts with WVU and Marshall University will help to overcome the roadblocks that prevent many West Virginians from receiving the quality medical treatment that they deserve.

August 13, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Wired to a High-Tech Future

Education has been the cornerstone upon which I have built my life. I realized early on that, for a poor boy from the coalfields, the only paths to success were education and hard work. Today, West Virginia's colleges and universities are preparing our young people for challenging futures in such fields as science, education, medicine, and technology. These students spend many hours in classrooms, laboratories, and libraries as part of their course work. But their studies, in recent years, have received an added boost from education resources around the world that are accessible through the Internet.

The Internet serves as a valuable educational tool on college campuses across the country. The World Wide Web allows students to conduct research for projects and papers, communicate with classmates and professors, and stay apprised of world events from the desks of their dormitory rooms. With a few simple computer keyboard strokes, students can access treasure troves of knowledge throughout the globe. But, in order to navigate the 'information superhighway,' students need an on-ramp.

One of the last colleges in the nation without a school-wide Internet network, West Liberty State College has launched its "CyberneticCampus" initiative to provide students

with fast, reliable Internet access. According to the college, the Cybernetic-Campus concept represents an institution-wide initiative to expand and enhance the integration of technology in classrooms, laboratories, and residence halls.

To help, I recently announced the release of \$1.7 million in federal funding that I added to an appropriations bill earlier this year. The funding that I obtained will allow West Liberty State to achieve its goal of building high-speed networks for students by equipping all residence halls with Internet access.

West Virginia has come a long way in promoting education and encouraging more young people to continue their studies after high school. But the journey toward excellence is a long one. While we have made progress, there are still challenges and opportunities ahead.

Education remains West Virginia's passport to progress. Young people who receive quality educations at West Virginia's colleges and universities give back tenfold to the future of the state. Through investments at West Liberty State College and the state's other academic institutions, students will have expanded research opportunities, new classroom resources, and improved learning environments.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

B&O Roundhouse Makes History Again

On July 31, an important piece of West Virginia's history was recognized for its contributions to the nation when the B&O Roundhouse in Martinsburg was designated as a National Historic Landmark. Nestled in the hills of the Eastern Panhandle, the Roundhouse joins some of the nation's most renowned sites previously designated as Historic Landmarks, including Mount Vernon, Pearl Harbor, and Alcatraz.

The designation stems in large part from the community's efforts to restore the Roundhouse to its original state. I have assisted by adding \$2 million to federal appropriations legislation for the project and supporting local efforts to secure an additional \$800,000 in federal funds.

Originally built in 1848, the Roundhouse was a technological wonder that pulled Martinsburg into the Industrial Age. Characterized by historians as a "machine in the garden," the Roundhouse allowed several steam engines to be repaired simultaneously without disrupting regular train flow. Trains would move from the main track onto a roundtable, similar to a Lazy Susan, allowing workers to spin the train to an empty bay for repairs. To pass the time, travelers browsed local shops for the latest fashions and sometimes spent the night at the Depot House hotel overlooking the rails below.

When the Civil War started, the Roundhouse became a military target. As

a vital transportation and communication route for the Union, General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson led Confederate troops on a march to destroy much of the B&O railroad during the summer of 1861, including the Martinsburg station. General Jackson's troops burned the Martinsburg machine shops, Colonnade Bridge, and Roundhouse. Between June 1861 and September 1864, the railroad was destroyed and repaired nine times.

After the war's end, the railroad rebuilt and expanded the Martinsburg Roundhouse complex. Workers used the original molds during the recasting, making the structure architecturally rare.

The Roundhouse played a major role in labor history as well. In 1877, after the B&O Company imposed a 10-percent wage cut on employees, rail workers in Martinsburg launched the great Pullman strike -- the country's first national labor strike.

Providing more than a century of rail service, the Roundhouse finally closed operations in 1988; but its legacy continues to this day. Eastern Panhandle residents and organizations have worked tirelessly to protect this piece of Americana. I applaud the efforts of those who have worked to restore the Roundhouse, and I encourage all West Virginians to take the time to learn about this important piece of history tucked away in our rolling hills.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Breaking the Cycle of Coal Slurry Tragedies

Throughout West Virginia's history, coal mining has been a staple. While coal has strengthened the state's economy, the dangerous realities of the mining industry have not been lost on West Virginians, including the threats from ponds holding a mine's waste material, called slurry.

Accidents at these impoundments continue to occur almost every year. Often, the walls of the impoundments give way, allowing the waste material to flow into area streams and water supplies. Many of these incidents are small, but even a small spill can affect families living many miles away. For instance, earlier this year, 270,000 gallons of slurry spilled from an impoundment in Logan County into a local creek. That creek spread waste for seven miles along its banks and the nearby Guyandotte River.

Some spills are much larger. The Mountain State never will forget the 1972 Buffalo Creek disaster in Logan County. When that impoundment gave way, the resulting devastation cost the lives of 125 people. Since then, there have been at least nine major spills in the Appalachian coalfields.

For instance, in October 2000, a breach at a coal impoundment in eastern Kentucky let loose 250 million gallons of slurry, which then flowed into tributaries of the Tug Fork and Big Sandy rivers along the Kentucky - West Virginia border, where

it tainted key water supplies in a 60-mile area.

It is time to find ways to protect communities from these coal slurry tragedies.

Following the October 2000 accident, the National Academy of Sciences, with my support, launched a study and made recommendations on methods to improve safety and reduce the environmental impacts of coal waste impoundments. Now, those recommendations are being implemented.

Using \$3 million that I added to federal appropriations legislation earlier this year, the National Technology Transfer Center in Wheeling, together with the National Energy Technology Laboratory in Morgantown, the Mine Safety and Health Administration, and the Office of Surface Mining, will undertake a pilot program in Southern West Virginia to study and improve coal impoundment safety. This funding will support efforts to develop innovative ways to reduce the risks for communities near these sites and for individuals who work there. It is my hope that this work can be applied to impoundments throughout Appalachia.

Finding solutions will not be simple, but can be achieved. We must learn from the tragic coal slurry breaches of the past and push forward to discover new economically feasible and environmentally friendly ways to prevent such disasters in the future.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Finding the Wisdom to Win the Peace

As the situation in Iraq continues to spiral out of control, an anxious nation watches. Despite assurances to the American people that our troops would be welcomed with open arms as liberators, U.S. soldiers are increasingly being met with guns and car bombs. The American people are told to be patient. Winning the peace will take time. Meanwhile, the frustration of the Iraqi people grows by the day, as does their anger.

What has become tragically clear is that the United States has no strong plan for turning Iraq over to the Iraqi people and is quickly losing even its ability to maintain order. The Administration is stumbling through the dark, hoping by luck to find the lighted path to peace and stability.

Despite the best hopes for an Iraqi democracy, the Iraqi people and the world see only the worst fears of occupation. Instead of inspiring steps toward self-government, we witness hit-and-run murders of American soldiers, terrorist attacks, and sabotage. We promised to improve the quality of life; yet, so far, we have failed to deliver. As a result, increasing numbers of Iraqis see the United

States only as occupier, not liberator.

Now it appears that the Administration may be ready to swallow its pride and seek a United Nations resolution to encourage foreign participation in the occupation of Iraq. This would be a positive development, one that the Administration should have embraced from the outset. The challenge is too great for the United States alone. We must work with the international community to forge what we cannot achieve alone: a lasting peace for Iraq and, in fact, for the Middle East region as a whole.

A hallmark of true leadership is the ability to admit when one is wrong and to learn from errors. Candidate George W. Bush spoke about the need for humility from a great and powerful nation. He said, "Let us not dominate others with our power -- or betray them with our indifference. And let us have an American foreign policy that reflects American character. The modesty of true strength. The humility of real greatness." It is time for the Bush Administration to swallow its false pride and return to that philosophy of humility before it is too late.

September 10, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting Diversity in the Media

Earlier this year, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted to change media ownership rules which currently limit the conglomeration of print, radio, and television outlets across the country. This dangerous decision to lift the ownership cap threatens to strangle diverse voices at virtually every level of news and commentary. I fear that Americans' freedoms would be trampled; their rights would be subverted.

Local news media represent a community's window on the school board, city council, and county commission. More than any other resource, local news outlets educate people about the issues that directly affect their daily lives. The new FCC rules would undermine that role by allowing one person or one corporate interest to control such a significant level of discourse and debate. News and information could be forced to fit into a corporate plan or personal agenda.

Large media conglomerates already control the vast majority of what Americans see, read, and hear. Five media companies control 75 percent of prime-time programming. These same five companies also control 90 percent of the top 50 channels on cable. On the Internet, existing newspapers and television networks dominate the most popular sites for news and information. Technology has increased the number

of media outlets, but it has not stopped big media from extending its reach.

The FCC's proposal threatens to expand the influence of these few corporations even further, stretching their hands around a larger number of local television and radio stations and scarfing up newspapers and Internet news outlets.

The Framers of the Constitution understood that the Republic would not function properly if the media were not allowed to operate freely and without intervention from government. However, the media industry also must recognize the responsibility it has to the public which relies so heavily on daily news reports. Allowing just a few individuals or corporations to control what Americans see, hear, and read would only give Americans less information to use in making decisions about the key issues they face. Such control could limit access to the free and fair information which impacts the lives of all Americans. It could diminish the coverage of local voices and local issues as media giants gobble up local stations and nationalize the stories they broadcast.

The Senate has recognized this danger and voted to block the FCC from implementing this new rule. I hope that the House of Representatives will take a similar bipartisan approach and vote to protect media diversity.

September 17, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Paycheck Protections for Working Families

Across West Virginia and the nation, families face an unsure economic future. In the last three years, nearly 3 million jobs have vanished from the American economy and are unlikely to return any time soon. Companies, in light of smaller profits and tough financial pressures, often are turning to their employees and retirees for concessions. Now, despite all of the challenges facing working families, the Bush Administration is pushing a plan that would take away overtime pay for millions of Americans. This Administration has turned a deaf ear to the working families of this nation.

The Administration's push to cut overtime pay follows in the footsteps of other initiatives that would eliminate worker protections and benefits. For instance, the White House has sought to prevent federal workers from unionizing and has consistently blocked an increase in the minimum wage. This is not the record of an Administration that understands the needs of working families. On the contrary, this Administration has not the faintest idea about what it takes for working, middle-class families to get ahead.

The President's proposal would repeal the 40-hour workweek, established by the Fair Labor Standards

Act of 1938, and take away the right of employees to earn time and a half for extra hours worked. The Bush plan would eliminate overtime pay protections for as many as 8 million American workers who currently are eligible for overtime pay.

These hard-earned overtime dollars often make the difference between workers just making ends meet and being able to provide a better life for their families. For many employees, overtime pay constitutes one-quarter of their wages. It is the extra cash to take care of elderly parents, a new baby, or unexpected medical costs. It is the money that is set aside for a child's college education.

That is why I worked in the Senate to win approval of legislation that would block the Administration's plan from taking effect. Overtime pay is one of the hardest-won achievements of the American labor movement. It was that extra help that families needed to stay afloat during the final years of the Great Depression, and it continues to bolster American families today.

For those who stay on the job after the five o'clock whistle blows or the shift ends, overtime pay is the reward for hard work. These critical dollars belong in the pockets of the workers who earn them.

September 24, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Preserving Steel Jobs in West Virginia

The American steel industry has weathered more than four years of unfair trade practices and waves of underpriced foreign steel imports. But just as these companies are turning a corner, the Bush Administration wants to eliminate the very initiatives that have helped these companies to get back on their feet. One such program targeted for extinction by President Bush is the Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee Program (ESLGP) which I created in 1999 to provide American steel producers with access to short-term funding in the face of the import crisis.

When I worked to create the ESLGP, I pledged to do all that I could to make certain that U.S. steel companies can survive in the face of unfair foreign trade practices in the global marketplace. Time has passed, but unfair trade by our international partners has continued. That is why the ESLGP must be available now and in the future to help steel companies gain ready access to capital.

Recently, I won approval from the Senate Appropriations Committee to extend the threatened program for another two years. Without this extension, the ESLGP will expire at the end of this year.

West Virginia's steel companies and their workers continue to make sacrifices to keep their furnaces burning. However, without

the guarantees provided by the ESLGP, the furnaces could go cold and thousands of jobs could be lost forever. In August, officials at Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel Corporation stated that their company was able to emerge from bankruptcy in large part because of the financial support made possible by the ESLGP. The loan guarantee application submitted by Weirton Steel earlier this year hangs in the balance if the ESLGP is not extended.

Over the past few months, I have been contacted by representatives of steel companies in California, Connecticut, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Utah -- all hoping to apply for a loan guarantee from the ESLGP next year. The program continues to serve an important purpose. Instead of spearheading efforts to kill it, the Bush Administration, which claims to support the U.S. steel industry, should encourage Congress to enact my two-year extension of the Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee Program. West Virginia has stood tall for steel. It is time for the Administration to do the same.

Now is not the time to walk away from the American steel industry. Too much is at stake for West Virginia and the country. Our steel companies need the help that is readily available through the ESLGP, and they need it now.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Finding a Cure for Breast Cancer

Each October, the nation marks "Breast Cancer Awareness Month" to focus attention on the disease and treatment options available for those diagnosed with it. Breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in American women, with 211,300 invasive cases expected in 2003. Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in U.S. women: 39,800 deaths are expected in 2003. It is imperative that experts find a cure and continue research into effective treatments.

One decade ago, breast cancer research was an unacceptably low federal funding priority. That is why I have worked with Senators from both parties to increase America's investment in life-saving breast cancer research. This year, the federal government will invest almost ten times as much as a decade ago to find improved treatments and, one day, a cure for this deadly disease.

This research is paying off. While the number of breast cancer cases remains high, it is declining. The American Cancer Society reports that among American women overall deaths from breast cancer dropped steadily during the 1990's. This improved survival rate is attributed to progress in both early detection and better treatments for the disease.

Experts state that the most effective way to detect breast cancer is through a

combination of clinical breast exams, regular self-exams, and routine mammograms. Many studies have shown that women who get yearly mammograms are more likely to find breast tumors while those tumors are still small and treatments are highly successful.

Mammograms and other detection options are available through the statewide breast and cervical cancer prevention, education, and screening project, launched in 1990 with funds I added to an appropriation bill. This initiative offers screenings to West Virginians who otherwise might not have access to such tests.

In addition, scientists at the Robert C. Byrd Cancer Research Laboratory at West Virginia University are on the trail of a cancer cure. The lab is part of the Mary Babb Randolph Cancer Center, which was established, in part, with \$13.3 million that I added to federal appropriations bills beginning in 1985. The Cancer Center is West Virginia's first statewide cancer research and treatment facility.

By continuing the investment in cancer research and aggressively moving ahead to find a cure for the disease, I hope that one day we will not need a "Breast Cancer Awareness Month." But until that day arrives, I urge women to learn how to detect the disease at an early stage. Early detection is still the key to survival.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Hearing First Responders Loud and Clear

The nation's first responders deserve the best equipment available but, in many communities, they are getting by with the worst. When an emergency occurs, it is critically important that local fire departments, law enforcement agencies, and emergency medical services be able to communicate with each other on the scene. The reliability of their communications equipment can be a matter of life and death.

The attacks on September 11, 2001, were a tragic wake-up call that too many first responders lack the tools they need to do their jobs and protect the communities which they serve. Much more needs to be done at the state and local levels to better prepare for, and respond to, potential future attacks. Improving interoperability among first responders' communications devices is an important first step to saving lives in any crisis.

All Americans, whether they live in rural communities or big cities, want to know that, if there is a terrorist attack or emergency of any nature close to home, their first responders will be able to take control of the situation and come to the aid of victims. This task is made dangerously difficult when the policemen, firefighters, and medical personnel who report to the scene are unable to share information and coordinate a response plan.

After receiving numerous calls for help from emergency services across the country, I included \$80 million in two federal spending bills last year for a new nationwide program to help emergency personnel to establish clearer lines of communication in times of crisis. Through this program, the Department of Homeland Security recently released funds to 17 counties across the country to assist emergency services in upgrading their communications systems.

I am pleased that Harrison County has been awarded a \$5.7 million grant to explore available equipment and technology options to increase interoperability among the region's emergency services. This funding will allow Harrison County to serve as a model for communications systems upgrades across the country and will help to make West Virginia and all of America safer.

First responders risk their own lives to save the lives of others each time they are called to duty. We must provide them with the best equipment to do their jobs. Harrison County now will have funds to invest in cutting-edge technologies to help to protect emergency personnel and citizens. I will work to ensure that the lessons learned in Harrison County will help emergency workers throughout the state and nation to better protect their communities.

October 15, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Blue Ribbon for Classroom Excellence

A blue ribbon is the symbol of excellence and success -- the mark of a job well done. Since 1982, the Blue Ribbon Schools Program has highlighted many of America's most successful schools. It supports and promotes improvements in education by recognizing schools that demonstrate a strong commitment to educational excellence for all students and that achieve high academic standards.

One does not need to attend the fanciest school to receive a quality education. The quality of teaching and the commitment of parents also are critical to a student's accomplishments. While the seed of intelligence may be planted at birth, it requires cultivation, care, and hard work to blossom into culture and wisdom.

Many schools in West Virginia have adopted that attitude and instituted programs to instill a passion for education in students. Recently, two West Virginia elementary schools received national recognition for their achievements with the Blue Ribbon Award -- the top award given to a school -- from the U.S. Department of Education. Steenrod Elementary School in Ohio County and Kenova Elementary School in Wayne County have been awarded this prestigious honor.

I congratulate the teachers, administrators, students, and parents at these schools on their hard work in achieving this recognition.

The Department of Education noted that Steenrod and Kenova have made significant progress toward meeting the challenging academic goals established in 2002 in the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

However, much work still remains. Too many schools are struggling to meet the significant mandates of No Child Left Behind without any new resources. While President Bush signed the act into law with great fanfare, he has not backed the funding necessary for more schools to achieve the successes of Steenrod and Kenova.

On more than one occasion, I have offered proposals in the Senate to fully fund programs to support the nation's elementary and secondary schools but, at each turn, the Bush Administration has opposed my efforts. Despite the setbacks, I remain committed to the task. We cannot afford to fail. The country's future depends in large part on the education of our young people. We need to take the necessary steps, which include providing adequate federal funding, to ensure that every child is placed on a path of lifelong learning.

Again, I applaud the accomplishments of Steenrod and Kenova elementary schools. Their success can serve as a model for all West Virginia schools as they strive for excellence and prepare our young people to lead the state and nation in years to come.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Recognizing Special Libraries

Opening the doors of a library reveals vast new worlds of knowledge to a child with just a library card and a desire to discover. For people of all ages, especially those who live in rural communities, the resources in the local library are often the only ticket to information about distant lands, fields of knowledge, and timely news.

Small libraries throughout West Virginia serve as community gathering places and provide vital programs and services for citizens. Recently, a West Virginia county received the nation's highest honor for extraordinary public service provided by libraries. The Pocahontas County Free Libraries was one of only three institutions across the country to be awarded the 2003 National Award for Museum and Library Service, an honor created to underscore the vital role of museums and libraries in society.

Located throughout the county's mountainous terrain, the four branches of the Pocahontas County Free Libraries (PCFL) in Green Bank, McClintic, Hillsboro, and Durbin are cornerstones of civic engagement. The libraries host activities for groups such as the Boy Scouts, business associations, the town council, blood drives, a pre-school playgroup, and youth after-school programs. Volunteers provide thousands of

hours of service, and local organizations make steady, substantial contributions to keep the libraries running.

The PCFL is home to the largest West Virginia and Appalachian collection of any small library in the state and has a Heritage Room with local historical materials and facilities for genealogical research. A collection named for Nobel Laureate and author Pearl Buck, who was born in Hillsboro, is currently under development. The libraries partner with other community groups for much needed historic and cultural projects, including such diverse items as a biographical film of a legendary local newspaper editor, a book and radio show about the history of forest fire towers, and a veterans' oral history project.

The PCFL serves as a model of excellence for small libraries throughout West Virginia and rural America. I congratulate the libraries' board of trustees, staffs, and community members on this well-deserved recognition. Their efforts ensure that the Pocahontas Free Libraries will continue to educate, enlighten, and inspire -- the role of all libraries in the state. The PCFL demonstrates that libraries are not just repositories of great books; they are also pathways to knowledge and gateways to the wonders of the world, right in our own neighborhoods.

October 29, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Infusing Funds in Community Emergency Efforts

Police, fire, and emergency response teams throughout West Virginia have sent a clear message to the U.S. Capitol, namely, they need more federal help to best do their jobs. Too often, these first responders have to rely on small events like bake sales and spaghetti dinners to raise funds for new trucks and safety equipment. But bake sale profits fall far short of the bill for the equipment and training that first responders must have. That is why I have tried repeatedly to provide additional dollars to help plug critical holes in our defenses here at home.

Most recently, I announced that West Virginia will receive nearly \$25 million in the next year for training, emergency response equipment, and terrorism prevention and deterrence grants. Specifically, West Virginia will receive \$18.9 million for terrorism and disaster training, equipment, and response planning. Another \$5.6 million will be directed to prevention and deterrence efforts. Finally, \$392,000 is for West Virginia's "Citizens Corps" -- an initiative modeled on the Neighborhood Watch program, where local residents develop plans to engage citizens in homeland security, community preparedness, and family safety initiatives.

West Virginia may not be the biggest or most populated state, but it holds potential terrorist targets.

For example, it is no secret that West Virginia has one of the most concentrated regions of chemical plants in the country. An attack on those plants could jeopardize thousands of lives. We need to take steps to ensure the security of those plants and the safety of the citizens who live nearby.

These funds also have an added benefit for West Virginia. The training and equipment provided to emergency response teams will be used not only in the event of a terrorist attack but also for disasters such as floods and ice storms.

For many months, I have worked through my leadership position on the Senate Appropriations Committee to provide first responders with adequate resources to carry out their critical duties. The release of these funds is the culmination of my work this year.

Congress has a responsibility to protect the nation. It must focus on the country's many serious vulnerabilities and invest dollars where they are most needed. When it comes to protecting this nation, there should be no distinction between providing necessary resources for troops overseas and for first responders at home. Police officers, firefighters, and paramedics are always willing to answer the call to duty; we must ensure that they have the tools and the training to be ready.

November 5, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

On the Job for West Virginia's Future

West Virginia's core industries of coal, steel, glass, and chemicals have withstood the test of time and been the lifeblood of our state. But times are changing. We are shifting to a high-tech and service-driven economy. We need to continue to support our traditional industries, but we also need to work to encourage the establishment and expansion of smaller entrepreneurs and high-tech companies.

I have worked for many years to do just that. Utilizing my leadership position on the Senate Appropriations Committee, I have identified national security and defense-related technology needs and matched them with people and resources in West Virginia. I also have added critical funding to federal legislation for worker training and infrastructure development that have attracted high-tech employers to the Mountain State.

The Information Manufacturing Corporation (IMC) first established operations in the state in 1998 at the Allegheny Ballistics Laboratory Hilltop Office Complex in Mineral County. Since opening in West Virginia, IMC has created 325 skilled jobs in Webster Springs, Rocket Center, Bridgeport, and Clarksburg. IMC is a success story which serves as a model for job development

efforts throughout the state.

ManTech is another company whose decision to put down roots in West Virginia has proved fruitful. ManTech's operations in Hinton and Fairmont play a crucial role in developing and applying new computer-related technology to support the Defense Department. By converting Defense Department documents from paper to electronic formats, ManTech helps the Pentagon to cut costs and increase efficiency. The quality jobs that the company supports -- jobs which did not exist only a few years ago -- are helping to create new economic opportunities for citizens of the Mountain State.

These companies are just two examples of thriving high-tech initiatives that call West Virginia home. These endeavors have the potential to bring with them greater economic prosperity and technological advancements that will benefit West Virginians today and for many years to come.

One of my priorities in the Senate is to help prepare West Virginia so that our children may stay in the state and find jobs to support their own families. The foundations we build and the opportunities we create provide benefits now, but the ultimate reward is the brighter future that we leave to our children.

November 12, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting Opportunity in Appalachia

In 1965, Congress, with my strong support, created the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). The goal of the ARC was to provide help to people living in the 13-state Appalachian region, people who were suffering because the economic progress that the rest of the country had experienced bypassed their region.

Today, nearly 40 years later, while much progress has been made in job opportunities, education, and health care, parts of Appalachia remain a step behind the rest of the country. The role of the ARC remains as important today as it was in 1965.

Despite the clear need, the Bush Administration has not been a friend to the ARC. In fact, in its latest budget request of Congress, the White House sought to cut in half the ARC's non-highway budget. This is funding for education and training programs, water and sewer system construction, small business start-ups and expansions, and development of health care resources. Such a drastic reduction would not have stunted growth in Appalachia; if accepted, the Bush budget would have set progress in Appalachia back by years.

Recognizing this danger, however, I went to work to defeat the Bush Administration budget and ensure that the ARC re-

ceived the funds that it so desperately needs. In light of the Administration opposition, it has not been easy, but Congress is preparing to give final approval to funding that restores the ARC budget. Instead of eliminating \$38 million from the ARC as the Bush White House proposed, Congress, at my insistence, will provide \$66 million for the agency for this fiscal year. That level of funding will protect the ARC's core mission of improving basic infrastructure, boosting job opportunities, and opening access to health care.

Since the ARC was founded, the 13-state Appalachian region has taken significant steps to overcome its isolation. Yet, the region still lags behind the nation in many respects. The cycle of poverty remains all too prevalent. Too many children go hungry. Too many families have no access to nearby health care. With the many challenges before us, there clearly remains much work to be accomplished by the Appalachian Regional Commission. Now is not the time to cut funding and slow progress, as the Bush Administration proposed; rather, now is the time to expand the partnerships and protect the initiatives that are moving West Virginia and the entire Appalachian region toward a brighter tomorrow.

November 19, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Giving Thanks for Many Blessings

Each year, America pauses to celebrate Thanksgiving, a day for recognizing and celebrating our Pilgrim heritage -- that small group of men and women who left their homeland, crossed a mighty ocean, and settled in a wilderness so that they could worship God as they chose.

A year after landing -- after months of privation, suffering, sickness, hunger, and death -- these men and women set aside time to express their gratitude to God for protecting them and for preserving their community. They were not only men and women of great courage, they were also men and women of great religious faith.

The tradition of Thanksgiving was reaffirmed during the American Revolution. Following the Battle of Saratoga in October 1777, the Continental Congress approved a resolution designating a day of "Thanksgiving and praise." Five years later, on October 11, 1782, Congress proclaimed "the twenty-eight day of November next, as a day of solemn THANKSGIVING to God for all his mercies: and they do further recommend to all ranks, to testify to their gratitude to God for his goodness."

Following the establishment of the new government in 1789, President George Washington issued the first Presidential proclamation

calling for "a day of public thanksgiving and prayer." At President Washington's request, Americans assembled in churches on the appointed day and thanked God for His blessings.

So it is that we celebrate this unique American holiday, a day devoted to family, to country, and to God. Indeed, we have so much for which to be thankful.

We can be thankful for the heritage of liberty bequeathed to us by our ancestors, who entrusted us to preserve this living legacy for future generations of Americans.

We can be thankful for those men and women who, 383 years ago, had the courage, the faith, and the devotion to God, to embark upon the most difficult and dangerous of journeys and face the darkest unknown so that they, and we, could worship freely.

We can be thankful for our families and friends and for the strength of home.

I hope that during this Thanksgiving, West Virginians will take the time to rediscover what it is that makes them a family. Before sharing that lovingly prepared feast, families should take the time not only to express thanks for the bounty that is set out before them but also for the opportunity to gather in kinship and to thank God for His manifold blessings.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Prescription for Medicare Trouble

Recently, Congress approved legislation creating a limited Medicare prescription drug benefit. I have long supported the concept of comprehensive Medicare drug coverage, but I could not support this legislation because of its price; the Republican Medicare bill would take the first step toward undermining the Medicare system that has benefited millions of retirees.

Specifically, the GOP plan forces Medicare beneficiaries to rely on a private, untried, drug-only insurance market for prescription drug coverage, rather than building on the traditional, successful Medicare program. This flawed legislation covers less than a quarter of Medicare beneficiaries' estimated drug costs during the next 10 years, and the complicated coverage formula has a large, gaping hole, that will leave seniors without a dollar of support right when they need that support the most.

This legislation includes copayments, premiums, and deductibles that may be unaffordable for many low- and middle-income elderly citizens. A closer look at the fine print of this legislation reveals that private insurers can choose to charge senior citizens double or even triple these amounts. Premiums can fluctuate dramatically based upon the location and the health of a beneficiary. At the same time, the federal government will hand over billions of taxpayer

dollars to for-profit insurance companies just to entice them to participate in the program. Further, this legislation explicitly prohibits Medicare from using the purchasing power of more than 40 million beneficiaries to negotiate for lower prices on prescription drugs -- a cost-savings practice regularly used by the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, and several states including West Virginia.

Under the Republican Medicare plan, Mountain State seniors will not receive the real, guaranteed benefit that they desperately need. Despite this legislation's big promises, too many elderly citizens will still be forced to split pills to make medicines last longer. Too many seniors will still go to bed at night struggling with the decision whether to take their limited incomes and pay for food and shelter or pay for the medicines that their doctors have prescribed.

This new Medicare package sells out senior citizens in exchange for big profits for prescription drug companies. Senior citizens and disabled citizens deserve more than a new scheme that leaves them naked to the whims of private insurance companies, and offers only a now-you-see-it, now-you-don't promise of coverage. Instead of selling illusions, Congress ought to work on a responsible, comprehensive, voluntary Medicare prescription drug benefit. Our seniors deserve no less.

December 3, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Steel's Fair-Weather Friend

The beleaguered steel industry has been dealt another blow, this time by the Bush Administration's recent decision to lift Section 201 tariffs on foreign steel imports. With this reversal, the President has removed the single most effective tool in place to help stabilize the American steel industry. Hope has been diminished for thousands of steel families who were just starting to see light at the end of the tunnel. It is bad news for the steel industry and bad news for West Virginia.

Since 1997, the American steel industry has been crippled by wave after wave of foreign imports. These imports have flooded the market and washed away thousands of jobs. After a lengthy investigation by the International Trade Commission (ITC), the President imposed tariffs last year of up to 30 percent on steel imports to provide the faltering steel industry relief from surges of imported foreign steel. But now, that help is gone.

I contacted President Bush and key Administration Cabinet officials several times to urge them to keep the Section 201 tariffs in place for their full three-year term. But instead of staying the course and completing the restructuring of a strong, stable domestic steel industry, the Administration has undercut the effort halfway through its intended

life span. In response, I have introduced legislation that would reinstate the Section 201 tariffs on steel imports and keep them in place through March 5, 2005.

The President's decision to lift the tariffs is an especially bitter pill to swallow because the program was working. It was eliciting the very industry adjustments the President called for when he imposed the tariffs. President Bush claimed that he wanted to give America's steel industry and its workers a chance to get back on their feet. But now the Bush team seems more than willing to let the steel industry land flat on its back.

When the Bush-Cheney ticket needed West Virginia's votes in 2000, it pledged to help our steel industry. The White House applied the steel tariffs, for which West Virginia was thankful. But then the President exempted import after import from those tariffs. Now the President has eliminated the tariffs completely. President Bush's support for West Virginia's steel communities apparently was nothing more than cheap lip service.

The White House may have forgotten the promises it made to the steel industry in West Virginia, but thousands of West Virginians will not forget. They recognize a fair-weather friend when they see one.

December 10, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Christmas Story

Christmas is one of my favorite times of the year, a time of joy and love, of family gatherings and warm memories. Over time, however, Christmas has become more about big store sales and shopping malls rather than the birth of Jesus. The meaning of Christmas is overshadowed by the pressures and strains of a commercialized holiday.

At its core, Christmas will always be about a couple who found no shelter but a manger, and also about a newborn child who would become the Savior of the world.

I hope that West Virginians pause to remember the words of Luke's Gospel, where the Christmas story comes to life.

"All went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

"And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger;

because there was no room for them in the inn.

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

"And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

During this holiday, let us reflect on family and faith. Let us share a meal with loved ones and give thanks for our blessings. Perhaps, then, the materialism of the season will fade and we can begin to truly understand the great and glorious meaning of Christmas.

My wife, Erma, and I wish for you a happy and holy Christmas and New Year.

December 17, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Return to Sender

The Internet is undoubtedly one of the most important inventions of the 20th century. In seconds, one can access a wealth of information about people and places far and wide. With a few strokes on a keyboard, one can send an e-mail message anywhere in the world. The advancements in communications technologies during my more than fifty years in Congress are nothing short of amazing.

Unfortunately, these technological breakthroughs also have a downside. More and more, unsolicited e-mail communications, commonly referred to as "spam" or "junk e-mails," are threatening to overwhelm the positive content of the Internet.

Experts estimate that more than 13 billion spam messages are sent each day. These unsolicited messages now account for nearly half of all e-mail traffic. Not only can spam be a nuisance, but its cost may also be passed on to consumers through higher charges from Internet service providers who must upgrade their systems to handle the heavy traffic. Also, spam often includes fraudulent information or adult-oriented material that offends recipients and concerns parents who want to protect their children. Experts estimate that spam will cost U.S. organizations more than \$10 billion in 2003 alone.

Congress has responded to the pitfalls of spam with passage of the "Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited

Pornography and Marketing Act of 2003." This legislation, which I was pleased to support, will outlaw some of the most common methods for generating mass e-mails. The bill also will establish penalties for the most prolific spam producers, including jail time and up to \$3 million in fines.

While passage of this bill is a step in the right direction, West Virginians can take immediate steps to protect themselves from these intrusive communications. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) website at <http://www.ftc.gov> provides information to help Internet users combat unwanted junk e-mail. The FTC recommends that individuals combat unwanted spam by using e-mail filters which are commonly available, reviewing the privacy policy when submitting an e-mail address to a website, and reading entire forms before transmitting personal information through the Internet. In addition, unwanted or deceptive e-mail messages can be forwarded to the FTC at uce@ftc.gov for use in law enforcement actions against people who send unsolicited e-mails.

The onslaught of unwanted commercial or pornographic e-mails threatens further expansion of the Internet. It is my hope that this new legislation, combined with prudent security actions taken by individual computer users, can begin to control this serious problem.

December 24, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

West Virginia Technology "Swarms" into Action

America must stand ready at a moment's notice to send its troops into harm's way when the need arises. Unfortunately, in the age of international terrorism, the unpredictability of the nation's enemies has dramatically increased the risks to the men and women of our military. While the critical missions of America's Armed Forces will always involve a certain degree of danger, there are efforts underway in West Virginia to provide the technology that can help to better protect our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines.

A team of West Virginia researchers will utilize \$4.25 million that I added to a recent federal appropriations bill to develop an intelligent control system -- essentially the brain -- for a small, light-weight unmanned aerial vehicle for the U.S. Navy. Unmanned vehicles, which are controlled from afar by military personnel, have become important tools in the military's arsenal.

Currently, many unmanned vehicles are operated individually with a rudimentary control system. But the project underway in West Virginia would allow new unmanned vehicles to fly in unison, as a flock of birds would. These new planes are called "Smart War-fighting Array of Re-configurable Modules." Coupled with sensors that

would detect biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons, this ability to "swarm" would allow these state-of-the-art vehicles to significantly increase the Navy's surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, while decreasing the risk to military personnel.

The intelligent control system will be developed for the Navy by Augusta Systems, a Morgantown-based technology company, and the West Virginia University Institute of Technology in Montgomery. As part of the project, McLean, Va.-based Alion Science and Technology company, a global research and development corporation, will open an office in Morgantown. The collaboration with the Navy in this effort is a testament to the caliber of the state's high-technology workers.

The many challenges facing the men and women of the nation's military forces underscore the ever growing need to research, develop, and build advanced and innovative defense weaponry. I take great pride in West Virginia's contributions -- from the laboratory to the battlefield -- to America's Armed Forces. I shall continue to work to provide the men and women of the military with the technology, equipment, and training that they need to successfully defend our nation.

December 31, 2003



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

NASA Exploration Opens New Opportunities

In the early days of the New Year, the exploration rover "Spirit" safely landed on the surface of Mars and started to send images of the Red Planet back to Earth. The landing was a great step forward for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), whose scientists will spend months analyzing pictures and information from the Spirit rover.

The "Spirit" will search for signs that Mars once sustained water. Progress may eventually spur a manned mission to Earth's neighbor in the solar system.

Many have questioned the wisdom of investing in the space program. However, investments in NASA have resulted in significant progress in West Virginia and the world.

For example, NASA is a key piece of the I-79 high-tech corridor in North Central West Virginia. The Independent Verification and Validation Facility (IV&V) in Fairmont was established in 1993 after I added \$10 million to federal legislation for the facility's construction. The IV&V's 215 workers test computer software to ensure the highest possible effectiveness for key NASA projects including the International Space Station, the Space Shuttle program, and the Kennedy Space Center.

The IV&V has spurred growth at the West Virginia High-Tech Consortium Foundation, anchored at

the Alan B. Mollohan Innovation Center. These facilities -- and the research underway there -- have led to hundreds of new jobs in the Mountain State.

The men and women of the IV&V continue to showcase the high-tech know-how and ingenuity that are alive in West Virginia. Through their work, the NASA specialists are showing that one does not have to leave the West Virginia hills to reach the stars.

NASA's high-tech efforts also have translated to everyday technologies. For instance, NASA-inspired communications satellites connect faraway locales, while orbiting eyes in the sky track hurricanes, wildfires, and volcanoes. Health care workers monitor many patients at once, thanks to technology first used to track the health of astronauts. And NASA research is helping make it safer to fly in a plane or drive on the nation's highways. Clearly, advancements in space continue to lead to advancements on Earth.

Each venture into space is another step toward innovation. The "Spirit" mission to Mars is such a step. While the journey is not easy, it is vitally important to the unlocking of the secrets of our world. I applaud the men and women of the "Spirit" project and salute those Americans who dedicate their lives to discovery.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Finding Families for Foster Children

Across America, hundreds of thousands of children are in foster care, hoping for the chance to be part of a loving family. Too often, however, prospective parents feel overwhelmed by bureaucratic red tape, facing long delays and immense piles of paperwork. In fact, many parents-to-be give up on the American adoption system and turn to foreign countries to find children. While it is important that parents are able to adopt children from all over the world, children in America are left bouncing from foster home to foster home.

Recognizing this dilemma, I supported legislation, recently signed into law, that is aimed at encouraging more parents to adopt children from America's foster care system. As a result of this legislation, the federal government will provide states with expanded financial incentives to encourage the adoption of special needs children and children over the age of 9. These two groups of young people traditionally face a difficult time finding a permanent home.

This new law builds on the Adoption Incentives Program, originally passed by Congress in 1997, that establishes an annual adoption goal for each state and then provides the state with a payment of \$4,000 per

child adopted above the goal. This program has proved successful. In the five years from 1998 to 2002, states placed more than 230,000 children in adoptive homes -- about the same number that had been adopted in the 10 years prior to 1998. Clearly, the incentives are working. More children are finding homes.

For an orphan or for someone in foster care, the day he or she is adopted is one of the most important days in that child's life. I know this firsthand. When I was two, my mother was dying from the influenza epidemic. She asked my aunt and uncle to adopt me as their own son. They did, and I went from being Cornelius C. Sale, Jr., to Robert C. Byrd. We moved to West Virginia, and my adoptive parents provided me with a loving, supportive home that continues to influence me to this day.

Too many children across the country are looking for that same chance. They need adults to step forward and make a difference in their lives. As the federal government continues to partner with the states to encourage adoption, I hope that more would-be parents take advantage. For to make a difference in the life of a child is to invest in the country's future.

January 14, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Keeping the Promise to West Virginia's Children

Two years ago, President Bush signed the "No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA)" into law. The Act was designed to insert accountability into the education system. The Act calls for regular testing of students to determine whether they are making progress. If they are not, changes must be made in a school.

Simply, the No Child Left Behind Act made a promise. In exchange for higher academic standards and greater accountability, President Bush promised to devote significant new resources to America's public schools. But, to date, it is a promise that the Bush White House has failed to fulfill. Accountability cannot just be a standard for teachers; it must also be a standard for this Administration.

About half of West Virginia's public schools receive Title I funding for children from poor school districts. This year, President Bush ignored the funding level pledged by NCLBA and asked Congress for an amount that leaves more than 2 million children without adequate education resources. I offered an amendment to legislation in the Senate that would have fully funded the promise to these children, but, with strong opposition from the White House, it failed.

The Administration soon will present its budget priorities for the next year to the nation. The

President has indicated that, again, he would cut the Title I funding promised to Mountain State schools by almost 35 percent. This means that 18,766 West Virginia children would be denied full academic services. Evidently, "Leave Only 18,766 Children Behind" was not a catchy enough title for the new law.

If the President were serious about education, he would provide the funds so that all students in America would have the opportunity to receive a first-class education. Instead, the President seems content to test students, determine that many are falling behind, and then leave it up to cash-strapped states to find the dollars to fix the problems. Amidst all the shouting about accountability, the Bush budgets are quietly undermining the ability of states to implement reforms. America's children will ultimately pay the price.

This is not a simple debate about budget priorities; it is a debate about our future. It is a debate about hiring good teachers, improving curricula, reducing class sizes, and buying educational materials -- all key elements in helping students to reach their academic potential. I voted for the No Child Left Behind Act. I support the reforms in that law. But schools need more funding if America is truly going to leave no child behind.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Celebrating West Virginia's Past

Beginning at an early age, West Virginians are taught the history of our state. Our state's heritage and traditions are important lessons to learn, for they highlight the struggle and the sacrifice that were so key to the establishment of West Virginia as the 35th state in the Union. Several organizations sponsor initiatives to more fully immerse West Virginia's young people in that heritage.

The West Virginia Division of Culture and History serves as the umbrella organization for many of those initiatives. For instance, that group, since 1979, has operated Camp Washington-Carver in Fayette County, named for Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver.

Dedicated in 1942, the camp originally served from 200 to 1,600 black youths in vocational agriculture, soil conservation, and home economics. Today, it serves as a resource for all West Virginians, preserving our mountain heritage, folklore, and arts with a dinner-theater series, concerts, and festivals. Each year, more than 10,000 people wind through the roads of Fayette County to visit the camp and participate in one of its many cultural programs.

In addition to its unique cultural role, Camp Wash-

ington-Carver also is a site of historic note. The camp is one of West Virginia's best-preserved and most ambitious examples of Roosevelt-inspired Works Progress Administration projects.

Recognizing the importance of this history, I have made it a priority to protect national parks, landmarks, and other sites of significance so that they survive for many decades to come. Recently, in an effort to preserve Camp Washington-Carver's history, I added \$150,000 to federal legislation to help the West Virginia Division of Culture and History make critical upgrades at the camp. These improvements will help to ensure that thousands more visitors can enjoy the camp's many programs while learning about an important part of West Virginia.

Even as West Virginia communities move forward with efforts to modernize and revitalize their economies, preserving the heritage of the Mountain State remains a top priority. The activities underway at Camp Washington-Carver, which combine historic appreciation and cultural heritage with economic development, serve as a model for others to follow.

January 28, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Weighing the Costs of Obesity

As the calendar flips to the second month of the new year, Americans are gauging the success of their New Year's resolutions, many of which concern weight loss. While staggering national obesity statistics show that these short-term efforts to drop pounds are a positive first step, the commitment to a healthy lifestyle should be a life-long endeavor.

Obesity impacts much more than outward appearances. Being severely overweight is a health risk and a growing epidemic which threatens the lives of many Americans. But the risks associated with obesity can be decreased with innovative education and prevention programs. That is why I have worked to provide critical new financial resources for the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to promote healthier lifestyles for all Americans.

Medical research has clearly shown that obese individuals have a much greater chance of contracting heart disease, diabetes, some cancers, hypertension, respiratory disease, arthritis, and a host of other medical ailments. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, approximately 300,000 premature deaths across the nation each year are associated with being overweight and obese. These facts sound an alarm for the residents of West Virginia where the prevalence of obesity is particularly high.

I recently included

\$45 million – \$17.6 million above the amount requested by President Bush – in federal legislation for the CDC's Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity program. This program provides funding for states and communities to initiate nutrition and physical activity programs to help prevent and control obesity and other chronic diseases.

Beyond the physical and emotional toll of being obese or overweight, these conditions account for health-related financial costs of more than \$100 billion annually. A significant portion of such weight-related medical bills is paid by taxpayers through the Medicare and Medicaid programs. At a time when all medical costs are skyrocketing, the federal government must find cost-effective strategies to reduce the burdens of obesity on the health care system. The disease should be treated and prevented more aggressively through public health programs, like those supported by the CDC, that encourage healthy diets and exercise.

Americans must not allow themselves to be shaped by a high-tech, on-the-go society that often fosters inactivity and unhealthy eating habits. We can no longer ignore the health risks and repercussions of obesity. I hope that the funding for the CDC's efforts to curb this preventable health threat will spur a national commitment toward helping all Americans embark on paths to healthier living.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Bush Budget Fails West Virginia Families

When it comes to budget priorities, President Bush's latest budget plan fails West Virginia families miserably. His budget puts programs that are important for big campaign contributors at the head of the table, while initiatives that help families in West Virginia are forced to scramble for funding scraps.

For instance, the President's budget fails to meet the funding promises made to West Virginia's children in the No Child Left Behind Act. In exchange for higher academic standards and greater accountability, President Bush promised in that act to devote significant new resources to public schools. But the President's budget breaks that promise, undercutting the No Child Left Behind pledge by more than \$7.1 billion.

When it comes to Social Security, the President's budget jeopardizes the retirement security of millions of Americans. In 2018, the Social Security Trust Fund is projected to be running in the red. At that point, an estimated 65 million citizens will expect full Social Security benefits.

I believe that any Social Security surplus should be used to extend the solvency of the program. But, instead, the President wants to use all of the Social Security surplus to make his tax cuts permanent. It is a short-sighted program that risks the retirement security

of 65 million Americans to fund tax cuts that are skewed to benefit the richest Americans.

Steel communities similarly are not protected by the President's backward budget priorities. President Bush has proposed rescinding \$35 million from the Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee Program. This program helps to keep American steelworkers on the job despite unfair trade practices by our foreign trade partners. Yet, this is the very program that President Bush has targeted for a significant cut.

Time after time in the President's budget, working families are asked not only to bear the burden of the massive deficits created by this White House, but also to accept cuts in those initiatives and services which are most vital to their lives. Education. Health care. Job protections. Retirement. These are West Virginia priorities, but they are not priorities of the Bush White House.

In the Senate, I will work to protect these initiatives that are so basic to working families. I will continue to push West Virginia's priorities to the head of the budget table. When it comes to federal priorities, working families need a strong voice in Washington else they be drowned by the Bush Administration's misguided policies.

February 11, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Expanding a National Treasure in West Virginia

West Virginia is home to many of the country's most notable national parks, rivers, trails, and recreation areas. Nature's bounty provides Mountain State residents and visitors from across the country with endless opportunities for adventure and learning. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park is one such treasure whose important role in American history, coupled with the scenic beauty of the Park and the surrounding rivers and hills, makes for a one-of-a-kind experience.

The Park's historical, recreational, and ecological significance suggests that the time is right to expand its boundary, a long-time goal of many Eastern Panhandle residents. I am pleased to have helped move the effort forward in Congress.

I have authored legislation, which recently won the approval of a key Senate committee, that would expand the park's boundary capacity by 1,240 acres, from its current 2,505 acres to 3,745 acres. The expansion plan has broad public support as well as the support of groups, including the Friends of Harpers Ferry, the Harpers Ferry Conservancy, and the Civil War Preservation Trust.

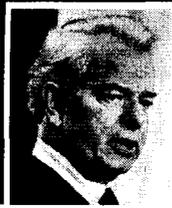
Harpers Ferry, which became part of the National Park System in 1944, hosted more than 300,000 visitors last year. Here, in one

setting, several themes in America's story converge: exploration, industry and transportation, the Civil War, and the natural splendor of our nation. The Park tells the stories of people and events that influenced the course of history and made the nation what it is today.

The rich history of Harpers Ferry is matched only by its great natural beauty. Throughout the year, West Virginians and visitors alike can be seen enjoying fishing, hiking, biking, horseback riding, rafting, canoeing, kayaking, and much more in this scenic setting.

In the Senate, I have worked to provide millions of dollars in federal funding for the National Park Service to update, renovate, and refurbish buildings and educational resources at Harpers Ferry. In addition, I shepherded funds through Congress for the purchase of the Murphy Farm property adjacent to the park and I facilitated the acquisition of the historic U.S. Armory Grounds in Harpers Ferry.

We must do all that we can to protect and enrich such a special place so that future generations can experience its grandeur and learn its lessons of history. That is why I will continue to work in the Senate to advance the effort to expand Harpers Ferry and ensure that it will touch lives for years to come.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Opening Job Access to the Blind

For people with disabilities, accomplishing what others see as a simple task at work can be an immense challenge. Whether it is a lack of wheelchair access or an inability to communicate through standard workplace technologies, Americans with disabilities too often must struggle to be active, contributing members of society.

The American Foundation for the Blind's Technology and Employment Center in Huntington (AFB Tech) is taking significant steps to break down the barriers between blind and visually impaired people and the communities in which they live. The Huntington center is instrumental in helping the American Foundation for the Blind to address two of the most critical issues facing the growing blind population -- employment and technology.

The numbers are surprising. Every seven minutes, someone in America becomes blind or visually impaired. Five million Americans age 65 and older are severely visually impaired. As the enormous baby-boomer generation ages, the number of older visually impaired people will double. Further, more than two-thirds of working-age blind or severely visually impaired Americans are not employed, largely due to a lack of training opportunities and significant obstacles faced in the workforce. The American Foundation for the Blind works to eliminate these barriers and help the 10 million Americans who are blind or visually impaired from reaching their

potential.

The experts at AFB Tech evaluate essential workplace technologies -- such as copy and fax machines, computer software, and cell phones -- and then offer recommendations to the industries that design devices on ways to make them more user-friendly for blind individuals. In addition, AFB Tech operates the CareerConnect program, a free national resource that assists blind and visually impaired persons to develop employment skills.

To enhance AFB Tech services, I recently won Congressional approval of \$1 million that I added to appropriations legislation to expand and improve the services of the Huntington facility. This funding will enhance the Foundation's efforts to make employment opportunities and workplace technologies more accessible to the blind.

This \$1 million will allow AFB Tech to expand the CareerConnect program which pairs sight-challenged individuals with blind or visually impaired mentors already in the workplace. The program's support network assists blind individuals to find diverse and challenging employment opportunities that match their skills and interests.

Barriers in communication and employment too often isolate people with physical disabilities. AFB Tech works to break through that isolation and open new opportunities for the blind and visually impaired, and I am proud to help this organization to accomplish its goals.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Beauty of the New River

Few song lyrics conjure up images of the grandeur of our country more than the words to America the Beautiful. Spacious skies. Purple mountain majesties. Amber waves of grain. When singing these words, one's thoughts paint the artwork of America's vast scenery. One may think of the Rocky Mountains, the Grand Canyon, or a colorful ocean sunset. But right here in our own backyard, West Virginia is home to one of the nation's most breathtaking sights -- the New River Gorge National River.

Tourists from across the country travel to our state to enjoy the New River's rugged white waters and surrounding mountains and canyons. I am proud to have helped write the legislation that established the New River Gorge as a national landmark on November 10, 1978. During the past 25 years, the park has grown into one of West Virginia's most visited natural assets. With its 53 miles of water and more than 70,000 acres of land, the park provides more than 1.1 million visitors each year with a wealth of outdoor opportunities, from white water rafting and hiking to mountain biking and fishing.

My work for the park did not stop at its creation. Utilizing my position as the

leading Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, I secured \$5 million to build the Canyon Rim Visitor Center in Fayetteville, \$2.5 million to renovate and preserve the historic train depot in Thurmond, and \$4.2 million to construct the Fayette Station Bridge. Furthermore, I have obtained an additional \$11.9 million to make critical upgrades and improvements to park facilities.

I have long supported investments in our national parks. It is important that we, as a nation, protect special places like the New River so that future generations also may enjoy their benefits and beauty. National parks serve as sites for recreational activities and tranquil places to escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life. But our parks also embody the very spirit upon which our country was founded. By protecting our nation's lands, we preserve the story of our country and ensure that this story is passed along to posterity.

With the preservation of the New River Gorge National River, we save a piece of America the beautiful. Generations of future West Virginians will be reminded that, from sea to shining sea, God truly has shed His grace on us.

March 3, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Strengthening Social Security, Not Jeopardizing It

From modest beginnings in 1935, Social Security has become an essential facet of modern life. Today, one in seven Americans receives a Social Security benefit. But the changing face of America is threatening to render Social Security bankrupt.

When the baby-boomer generation begins to retire, the number of retirees is expected to grow much faster than the number of workers paying into the system. That will place a much greater financial strain on the Social Security system which, if left unaddressed, could jeopardize retirement and disability benefits for tens of millions of Americans.

Ignoring the financial crisis facing Social Security will not make the crisis go away. But, rather than address the fundamental problem, the Bush Administration has squandered any opportunity to secure America's primary retirement and disability program. In fact, instead of ensuring the Social Security benefits promised to workers, the President's budget would spend the entire Social Security surplus of the next five years -- \$1.1 trillion -- to pay for tax cuts for the affluent and corporate elite. Not one dime would be allocated to save Social Security. If America continues on the Bush Administration's fiscal course, we will lose the best

opportunity we have to save Social Security.

Everyone has a stake in the future of Social Security. It provides a safety net for retirees, workers with disabilities, and children who have lost a parent. Social Security can be the difference between living with dignity or living in poverty.

Many West Virginians have called my office concerned that the benefits on which they rely might soon disappear. I will continue to push for sensible approaches to strengthen Social Security, not fiscal plans that jeopardize its future. Congress must anticipate the baby-boomer retirement and plan for it. That means eliminating the massive federal deficit sparked by the Bush White House's fiscal priorities of tax cuts above all else, and putting the people's priorities first.

When President Roosevelt signed the law creating Social Security, he stated that it would "give some measure of protection to the average citizen and to his family against the loss of a job and against poverty-ridden old age." Congress and the President share a responsibility to keep that pledge. It is time for serious debate about the future of Social Security, not just more political posturing from a White House that, to date, continues to undermine the long-term health of the nation's retirement system.

March 10, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Cashing in on the Earned Income Tax Credit

The April 15th deadline for filing federal tax returns is fast approaching, and it is important that West Virginians take advantage of tax benefits for which they are eligible. One in particular, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), can provide significant tax relief for many of the state's low-income families.

Congress initially enacted the Earned Income Tax Credit in 1975 as a temporary effort. But it has since grown into one of the largest anti-poverty programs in the federal government. Of the 750,456 West Virginians who filed a 2001 federal tax return, 133,414 claimed the EITC and received an average tax benefit of \$1,597.

West Virginia taxpayers with annual incomes below \$34,000 may be eligible for the EITC. Depending on the number of children, tax filers could claim a credit of up to \$4,204. Because the EITC is a refundable tax credit, a West Virginia taxpayer need not owe taxes to benefit. The EITC can even be distributed to claimants as an advance payment. This extra cash can be used to pay for doctor visits, medicines, school supplies, or groceries.

Despite efforts to raise awareness about the Earned Income Tax Credit, it is estimated that 10 to 15 percent of those eligible for

the EITC nationwide do not take advantage of its considerable benefits. In West Virginia, while many taxpayers utilized the EITC, many more were eligible yet failed to apply for the benefits available to them.

Tax forms can be confusing for even the most savvy filer. The National Taxpayer Advocate is an organization that can help taxpayers with questions about filing for the EITC. This independent service within the IRS can help taxpayers to determine their eligibility for the EITC and file the correct tax documents. The Taxpayer Advocate national hotline number is (877) 777-4778, and the West Virginia branch number is (304) 420-6616. More information about the EITC is also available at the IRS website, www.irs.gov, or by calling (800) 829-1040.

For many years, I have worked in the Senate to help expand the EITC and to deliver its benefits to West Virginians. With more West Virginians feeling the pinch of rising health care costs and a sluggish job market, the EITC can provide struggling families with much needed assistance to help make ends meet. I strongly encourage West Virginians who may be eligible for the EITC to check with the Taxpayer Advocate and to take advantage of the EITC's considerable benefits.

March 17, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Looming Questions in Iraq

March 19 marked the one-year anniversary of America's invasion of Iraq. As the nation reflects on this milestone, our first thoughts should be of the service of the dedicated men and women of our Armed Forces. Americans owe them a debt of gratitude for their courage and patriotism.

The costs of war have been very high. More than 580 American servicemen and women have lost their lives. Countless thousands of Iraqis have perished, among them many innocent civilians. The American people have sacrificed \$121 billion taxpayer dollars for the war and the reconstruction of Iraq so far, and the end is not in sight.

Large numbers of American troops will be tied down in Iraq for years, unless the White House reverses its unilateralist ways and brings in more foreign troops to stabilize the country. The White House's continued refusal to include the United Nations and its corps of nation-builders in Iraq in any serious manner means that turning power over to Iraqis soon will be difficult and dangerous. The Bush Administration should never have started this war before building a strong coalition.

It is evident that the White House hype about weapons of mass destruction was no more than a rhetorical on-ramp to get this country

on the road to war. The President claims the power to send this nation to war, whether or not we face an imminent threat. Despite vocal opposition from the people, Congress passed a blind and improvident authorization for war in October 2002, buying into the dangerous doctrine of preemptive war. This hand-off of power should be reexamined.

A foreign policy based upon striking first and asking questions later shreds the Constitutional requirement that gives Congress, not the President, the last word on questions of war and peace. Moreover, this unilateralist doctrine has turned the image of the United States into that of a bully on the international stage.

In seeking to eliminate what the Administration claimed was a terrorist haven, we have created a swamp of violence instead. By rushing to act without the strong support of the community of nations, the Bush Administration has isolated America and made targets of the few allies we retained. As we begin the second year of war and occupation in Iraq, will we now insist on continuing the disastrous mistake of a highly visible, made-in-America occupation? I hope that the Bush Administration will learn from its errors and chart a new course in Iraq.

March 24, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Paving the Way to a Brighter Future

In West Virginia, we understand the importance of modern roads. They make for safe travel to school and to work. They cut down on traffic deaths. They open our state to more visitors who come to discover the natural beauty of our home. Modern roads and highways create new job opportunities. With these facts in mind, it is no surprise that I have long made infrastructure improvements, particularly roads, highways, and bridges, a top priority during my service in the U.S. Senate.

Every six years, the Congress writes legislation that funds construction of these projects. Recently, the Senate approved a proposal that would infuse more than \$2.5 billion in West Virginia highway and road construction. Overall, that represents an increase of \$715 million, or 38 percent, above the funding included in the last six-year bill.

This federal investment will mean progress and jobs throughout the state. It will mean new funds for projects that have been in the works for many years, projects that West Virginians are ready to see become reality.

Whether by helping to construct Route Nine in the Eastern Panhandle, the Mon-Fayette Highway in North Central West Virginia, U.S. 35 in Southeast West Virginia, or the Coalfields Expressway in Southern

West Virginia, these dollars will improve the quality of life for all Mountain State residents.

Despite the strong support from Democratic and Republican Senators, and despite the obvious boost that this legislation would provide to the national economy, the President has threatened to veto this highway bill. The Bush White House has criticized the investment in highways as too expensive.

What the nation cannot afford is further stonewalling by the Bush White House. America needs these funds for safer roads; America needs these funds for new jobs. If he were to veto this bill, the President would cancel out tens of thousands of new jobs in West Virginia and across the country.

I look forward to the completion of each mile of these roads because they provide a safer, more modern route for the West Virginians who live nearby and for visitors who come to discover the beautiful scenery of our state. Upon completion, they will connect the nation to the heart of our state with four-lane roads that travel through -- not around -- West Virginia. This legislation and the dollars that it provides would help to pave the way to a brighter future for West Virginia and for the nation.

March 31, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Standing By Our Vets

The unfortunate reality of America's ongoing military occupation of Iraq is that soldiers will continue to lose their lives and many more will be wounded in their brave service. To date, more than 3,000 Americans have been wounded in Iraq. Many of these fallen soldiers will require long-term medical care from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Now more than ever, the country must stand by its pledge to provide high quality medical care to its veterans.

Yet, a Veterans Affairs (VA) advisory panel has recommended that inpatient services be eliminated at the Beckley Veterans Area Medical Center (VAMC) in Raleigh County. The panel's study, which began in 2000, analyzed the need for VA facilities across the country based on predicted future veteran populations. The report, if approved, would require the 15,000 veterans enrolled at the Beckley VAMC either to rely on local medical facilities outside of Beckley for their medical care or to travel to the nearest VA hospitals in Salem, North Carolina, or Richmond, Virginia.

In addition to its recommendation to cut inpatient services in Beckley, the panel's report also rejected the VA's designation of the Beckley VAMC as a 'Critical Access Hospital,' which

would have retained at least 15 of the current 40 inpatient beds at the facility.

This is a bad plan at the worst time. Scaling back the services provided by the Beckley VAMC would do a great injustice to those West Virginia veterans who rely on the facility for their medical care. Removing acute inpatient hospital beds would turn away the veterans who are most in need of high-quality care close to home.

The good news is that the panel's recommendation is just that, a recommendation. VA Secretary Anthony Principi has yet to accept or reject the panel's assessment. I, along with Senator Jay Rockefeller and Congressman Nick Rahall, have urged Secretary Principi to reject this misguided recommendation and do right by our state's veterans. They deserve nothing less.

West Virginia's sons and daughters have a long history of military service to their country. Thousands are currently serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other military operations around the globe. In exchange for their service in the nation's defense, the government must make good on its promise to provide veterans -- those who served in past wars and those who return daily from the scourge in Iraq -- with the very best medical care possible.

April 7, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Building for a Better Future

West Virginia, like the rest of the country, has had a difficult time in recent years holding on to jobs. But throughout the state, initiatives are underway to reverse this trend and put West Virginia on a path for job growth, not job loss.

For instance, in Cabell County, the Huntington Area Development Council has taken the lead in designing and constructing the new Velocity Center. This center is expected to draw high-tech businesses and jobs to the city and thereby ensure that the region will continue to be a magnet for new economic opportunities for years to come.

As the top Democratic member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I added \$1 million in federal funds toward this project, an investment that will supplement \$4 million in private funds to finish construction. The goal is to have biotech companies housed at the center, some of which would come about as a result of research at the Marshall University Biotechnology Science Building. That facility is currently under construction thanks to \$35 million that I added for the project.

In Webster County, local officials have developed the Webster County Business Park and are constructing a high-tech office to anchor that park. I added more than \$2.6 million in federal funds to the effort. In fact,

while the new office building will not be open until later this spring, the facility has attracted Information Manufacturing Corporation (IMC), a West Virginia company headquartered in Mineral County. IMC already employs 87 people at a temporary facility in Webster Springs and plans to house up to 130 employees at the new facility by the end of this year.

Similar success is growing in Summers County, where local officials and the State of West Virginia and I have worked together to attract new high-tech opportunities. Utilizing \$3.6 million in funds that I added to legislation in recent years, the City of Hinton will soon award a construction contract to create an office complex which will house high-tech businesses and up to 150 jobs.

These efforts are bringing real change to West Virginia. Through innovation and cooperation, these communities are building opportunities that will grow for many years to come.

For too long, our state's mountains were barriers to economic progress. With technology, those mountains can be traversed in the blink of an eye. The early successes of these ventures in Webster and Summers counties, and the bright outlook for the Velocity Center in Cabell County, prove that West Virginia is on the move.

April 14, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Don't Balance Trade Policy on Workers' Backs

In today's market, manufacturers face many challenges. Hiring well-trained employees. Meeting health care costs. Moving products to market. Things are much more complicated than when I owned a small business in 1950.

One distinctly different aspect of business today is foreign competition. In 1950, small businesses were concerned when a competitor opened around the corner. Today, they are concerned about competition from around the globe.

West Virginia productivity and commitment to excellence have always resulted in high-quality products. But when foreign competitors ignore trade agreements, pay workers pennies, and shun environmental standards, the ground is no longer level.

Consider the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which eliminated trade barriers between the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Since NAFTA began 10 years ago, West Virginia exports to Canada have risen 186 percent, while exports to Mexico are up 122 percent. The exports have increased employment, but not enough to offset NAFTA-related job losses. According to the Economic Policy Institute, West Virginia has gained 4,030 export-related jobs since NAFTA began, but has lost 7,512 jobs because of imports. We are going backwards.

The consequences for West Virginia are very real.

In places that were once home to apparel manufacturers, for example, doors are locked and windows dark. In Bradshaw, McDowell County Apparel closed its doors, as did Connie Sportswear in Franklin, Safety Stich in Harrisville, Spenco in Glenville, Kellwood in Spencer, and Reibord Brothers in Buckhannon. All cited the pressure of foreign competition for their closures. These are jobs that, in all likelihood, are not coming back. Whole industries have been lost.

Despite the track record, the Bush White House is pushing new, broader trade policies. As the President moves forward with his Free Trade Area for the Americas plan, modeled on NAFTA, Congress must keep in mind the problems that arise when free trade ignores basic concepts of fair trade. Free trade is not "free" when it costs American jobs.

Congress should not simply acquiesce to the Administration's plan. Congress ought to demand that trade negotiations be a two-way street, in both form and substance. Expanded trade benefits all countries, but the rules have to be fair.

For too long, Congress has walked away from an active role in the formulation and implementation of trade policy. Congress must resolve to restore the Constitutional balance and insist that trade agreements reflect the interests of American workers and industries.

April 21, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Eastern Panhandle Plays Key Homeland Security Role

What once was a small facility in Falling Waters has quickly grown into a key part of America's efforts to protect our nation from terrorist attack. The West Virginia home of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) plays an important role in preventing attacks in the United States.

The ATF National Tracing Center was dedicated in Falling Waters in 1994. Since locating there, the Tracing Center has experienced significant growth, expanding from 100 initial employees to more than 425 employees today, with a local economic benefit of more than \$22 million. Such growth reflects the increased mission and the high quality of work from the men and women employed there. That growth also meant the need for a new facility, which is why I added \$8 million to legislation to renovate the former IRS building in Martinsburg to serve as the new home for the ATF National Tracing Center and other ATF efforts.

Since September 11, 2001, the country has worked to identify new threats and dangers that before did not carry as high a priority. As part of that examination, Congress passed the Safe Explosives Act in 2002, placing stricter requirements on those who are

responsible for explosive materials. With more than 6 billion pounds of explosives produced annually, stricter regulation helps to prevent explosives from falling into the hands of terrorists.

To implement that law, the ATF tasked the men and women at the Martinsburg facility with a new role -- heading the Federal Explosives Licensing Center. This center will be a valuable law enforcement resource.

Specifically, the new Federal Explosives Licensing Center will handle the processing and subsequent issuance or denial of all explosives licenses and permits. This includes conducting background checks and issuing clearances for all individuals responsible for explosives operations, as well as people who possess explosives. Recognizing the importance of this mission, I added \$4 million to legislation earlier this year to accelerate the work at this new center.

The ATF in West Virginia is a great success story, not only from a Mountain State perspective but also from a national security viewpoint. The men and women at the ATF in Martinsburg are working each day to make the country safer from crime and terrorist attack. I applaud their efforts and look forward to their continued success.

April 28, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Expanding an American Treasure in West Virginia

Millions of visitors each year enjoy the beauty of the Monongahela National Forest. Headquartered in Elkins, the forest stretches more than 909,000 acres in 10 counties in West Virginia, making it the fourth largest National Forest in 20 northeastern states.

Ensuring that the forest stays healthy and a resource for many generations to come requires good stewardship and management. It also requires an eye toward the future, which is why a recent announcement that the U.S. Forest Service would add more than 1,400 new acres to the Monongahela National Forest is such good news.

I added \$1.8 million to federal legislation that allows the Forest Service to purchase those acres from The Nature Conservancy. The Nature Conservancy first purchased the property from Beckwith Lumber of Pocahontas County.

The Monongahela National Forest is an American treasure in West Virginia. By protecting the forest and building on its legacy, we ensure that people from around the world will be able to marvel at its beauty for decades to come.

The land being added to the forest includes high-elevation sites on Gauley and Cheat mountains and near the Highland Scenic

Highway. Spruce forests on these high summits support habitat for the West Virginia northern flying squirrel, which is federally listed as endangered. These properties also include native brook trout streams, access to hiking trails, and buffers for the upper Elk River and the historic Allegheny Battlefield.

I applaud the cooperation between Beckwith Lumber and The Nature Conservancy, and, in turn, the U.S. Forest Service. This public-private effort recognizes the need to balance economic opportunity with environmental conservation. The transfer of these acres to the Forest Service will provide for the preservation of unique areas while allowing for timbering work in areas that are not as environmentally sensitive.

More than 23 million visitors traveled in West Virginia last year, making tourism one of our leading industries. The Monongahela National Forest and other natural resources were top destinations. I am delighted to help create an infrastructure that supports tourism and recreation and conservation of historic lands. I hope all West Virginians will take the opportunity to enjoy these special places with their friends and families.

May 5, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Back to School: Bush Budget Doesn't Add Up

Throughout West Virginia, the school year is winding down and students are looking forward to the summer break. But the time away from the classroom does not provide any respite for school superintendents, principals, and teachers. In fact, many of them will spend the summer struggling to find the resources to match the mandates of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

President Bush championed this act as a way to improve the performance of schools across the country. Signed into law in 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act made a promise. In exchange for higher standards and greater accountability, President Bush promised to devote significant new resources to America's public schools. But, to date, it is a promise that the Bush White House has failed to fulfill.

Nationally, the President falls short of the funding promised in the No Child Left Behind Act by \$9.4 billion. For West Virginia's classrooms, the news is not good.

About half of West Virginia's public schools receive Title I funding -- dollars geared specifically for children from poor school districts. The No Child law established specific funding levels for Title I for every year through 2012, including \$20.5 billion for the coming

year. But the Bush budget undercuts that pledge by more than \$7.1 billion.

While No Child Left Behind promised Mountain State schools \$163 million for Title I for 2005, the President cuts that funding by almost 40 percent. Translated into students, the President's budget would deny full services to 21,366 West Virginia children.

The Title I program is not the only education program targeted for shortfalls. The Bush Administration freezes Pell Grant awards for the third straight year, cutting back on college financial assistance. The White House also has proposed to eliminate funding for 38 school programs including dropout prevention, school counseling, alcohol abuse reduction, and arts in education.

In the Senate, I have written and voted for amendments to make good on the funding promises made to our schools but, each time, these amendments have been targeted for defeat by the Bush Administration. If there is one federal investment that can offer real dividends down the road, it is education. But the White House continues to play political games with classroom funding. It is time to end the posturing and give students and teachers the resources that they need to succeed.

May 12, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Top Flight Homeland Defense Training in West Virginia

For three years, military specialists, National Guardsmen, and local emergency responders have traveled to West Virginia to take advantage of training opportunities available nowhere else in the country.

The Center for National Response, located at the Memorial Tunnel in Kanawha County, customizes training scenarios to provide life-like situations to test and improve the response from police, fire, and emergency medical teams. Military units have taken advantage of the tunnel's structure to prepare for the caves and mountains of Afghanistan. Operated by the West Virginia National Guard, the tunnel has proved itself a valuable piece of security efforts at home and abroad.

The Virtual Medical Campus, a collaborative effort between West Virginia University and the West Virginia National Guard, provides local emergency responders and medical officials with information on how to identify, treat, and contain any possible chemical or biological terrorist attack. This system is designed to link doctors and emergency personnel at the point of an attack with specialists who can immediately identify steps to take in the event of a terrorist attack to protect people living and working nearby.

The Regional Training Institute at Camp Dawson in Preston County gives National Guardsmen and other military personnel the

opportunity to train for a range of important missions, including special operations and defense against weapons of mass destruction.

I am proud to have been able to assist in these initiatives, adding more than \$43 million to legislation to bring these projects to life.

Now, recognizing the value of these facilities to the country and their potential for the future, the U.S. National Guard Bureau has announced that West Virginia will be the site for the first comprehensive National Guard homeland defense training facility. This new center will be based at Camp Dawson and will build on the homeland security training facilities already in place in West Virginia.

This new center will mean new resources and new responsibilities for Camp Dawson. While the standard for excellence has always been high, this decision to make Camp Dawson the first National Guard Joint Training Center (JTC) for Homeland Defense raises the bar to a much more demanding level.

Long before September 11, 2001, West Virginia recognized the dangers of potential terrorist attacks here at home and quickly moved to train Guardsmen and first responders. That work has paid off with valuable lessons learned -- lessons that we can share with the rest of the nation. By training today, we can save lives tomorrow.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Fighting Global Terrorism in West Virginia

Last December, American military forces captured Saddam Hussein in a spider hole in Iraq. Images of authorities collecting Saddam's DNA and fingerprints dominated the news.

DNA and fingerprints are examples of biometrics -- distinctive physical and behavioral characteristics that are used to verify an individual's identity. Hand geometry, voice, and the iris of the eye are among these unique traits. Biometrics were used in Iraq to confirm that the captured man was indeed Saddam Hussein.

West Virginia is leading the way in the national effort to utilize this cutting-edge technology. The Justice Department's biometric experts work at the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Clarksburg. Also located in Harrison County, the Biometrics Fusion Center (BFC) tests and evaluates biometrics technologies for the Department of Defense. Since 1999, I have secured \$141 million to launch and expand the Defense Department's biometrics initiatives.

The BFC and the Clarksburg FBI facility work cooperatively every day in support of the men and women fighting terrorism around the world by identifying potential terrorists and other threats to the country's security. Fingerprints lifted at crime scenes and terrorist "safe houses" are compared against fingerprints in the FBI's database to determine if that person has committed prior criminal acts against

the country.

The BFC also works closely with industry and academia, spurring new business interest and growth along the I-79 high-tech corridor. As a result of this collaboration, West Virginia companies have discovered new economic opportunities by incorporating biometrics technologies.

In Morgantown, West Virginia University (WVU) provides a nationally unique undergraduate degree program in biometrics. The university plays a leading role in biometrics research on behalf of the federal government. The BFC employs as many as 10 WVU student interns each year, offering them a real-world opportunity to learn more about the industry and to better prepare them for careers in biometrics.

This summer, the BFC will continue its critical work in its new location at the Keeley Building in downtown Clarksburg. This facility will house a state-of-the-art demonstration center to showcase biometric technologies. The BFC will eventually transition to a permanent location at the FBI's Harrison County campus.

Biometrics offers real solutions to the significant security challenges facing America. The Mountain State had the foresight to embrace this cutting-edge technology and will continue to lead the way in the fight against terrorism at home and abroad.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Remembering the Sacrifice of Our Veterans

It was 60 years ago that Allied Forces launched the D-Day invasion to free Western Europe from Nazi control. The task was daunting. No such army had ever crossed the English Channel. The Allied armada was 5,000 vessels strong, transporting more than 150,000 men and 30,000 vehicles. More than 13,000 men boarded 800 planes from British airfields and parachuted behind enemy lines in France. Another 300 planes bombarded the French coast with more than 13,000 bombs immediately before the invasion began.

The stories of that invasion remain chilling and inspiring, gruesome and profound. By nightfall, more than 9,000 Allied soldiers had been wounded or killed in action. But their sacrifice was not in vain. More than 100,000 Allied forces had made it ashore and started to secure coastal French villages. The liberation of Western Europe had begun.

It is fitting that in the year we mark this 60th anniversary of the D-Day invasion we also dedicate the World War II Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Tens of thousands of Americans have already visited this new memorial, and millions more are expected as part of this summer's 100-day tribute to World War II veterans.

Journalist Tom Brokaw nicknamed the men

and women of the World War II era as "The Greatest Generation." Their sacrifices and struggles certainly helped to shape not only 20th Century America but also the world.

To keep that history alive for generations to come, students at the West Virginia University (WVU) Perley Isaac Reed School of Journalism have partnered with the Library of Congress in the Veterans History Project. Students have been interviewing veterans and recording their stories for preservation in the Library's collection. The interviews are not intended to serve as a formal history of war, but rather as a unique resource of individual experiences.

WVU students are not alone in this effort. The West Virginia National Guard, VFW and American Legion Posts, and several schools and public libraries have partnered in the Veterans History Project. A list of the partner organizations can be found on my Internet site at <http://byrd.senate.gov>.

Veterans can pass on the lessons that they have learned to younger generations, thereby ensuring that their experiences will extend long into the future. I encourage West Virginians to participate in the Veterans History Project, for the fabric of our nation is made richer when the embodiment of history, our nation's veterans, share their stories.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Going Back to the Future in Charles Town

I recently had the pleasure of visiting one of West Virginia's most historic towns which today has a whole new look. I joined with citizens and local officials in Charles Town to celebrate the completion of the Downtown Revitalization Project. This inspiring effort to spruce up the aging downtown square honors the community's respect for the past as well as its hope for the future.

Like many locations in the Mountain State, Charles Town is blessed with the special richness of history. The stalwart of the downtown square, the Jefferson County Courthouse, was originally built in 1808 on land donated by Charles Washington, George Washington's brother. The historic building housed the trial of abolitionist John Brown in 1859 and was the scene of another famous trial involving 200 miners and union leaders during the coal mine wars of the 1920's. Today, Charles Town is a key stopping point on the Washington Heritage Trail, a national scenic byway designated several years ago with my assistance.

The people of Charles Town understand that their history is an inextricable part of the fabric of their future. Walking the streets of Charles Town is like traveling through the early days of America's story. The town had started to show its

age, and community leaders developed a plan to give it a makeover befitting its significance in the nation's history.

The Downtown Revitalization Project repaired cracked and deteriorated sidewalks, repaved downtown streets, and replaced the drinking water system. The effort also included the purchase of new street furniture, historically designed street lamps, trees, and tourism street signs. These changes will reap benefits in public safety and increased opportunities for local businesses. The revitalized downtown should help residents and visitors alike to link the town's meaningful past and thriving present.

I am pleased to have been a part of the effort to help build a solid foundation for Charles Town's growth by obtaining \$1.2 million in federal funding to support economic development and tourism. I share the community's hope for a renewed, bright future, and I am glad I could help to make the revitalization project a reality.

This effort to breathe new life into downtown Charles Town serves as a model for cities throughout West Virginia. When respect for the past, pride in the present, and hope for the future come together, we make our communities the best they can be.

June 9, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

New Resources to Fight Obesity

Rarely does a week go by without a new health warning about the dangers of obesity. While some people may be content in brushing off the warnings, the consequences can be severe.

Without doubt, obesity is a serious condition which concerns much more than outward appearances. It is not a simple case of eating too much or needing to lose a few excess pounds. Obesity is an epidemic that threatens the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans.

For instance, a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* reports that being overweight and obese may account for 20 percent of all cancer deaths in American women and 14 percent of cancer deaths in American men. Translated, that means that 90,000 cancer deaths in West Virginia and across the country could be prevented each year if Americans could only maintain a normal, healthy body weight. It is an eye-opening report.

A new report from the Yale University School of Medicine notes that obese children are more likely to develop a cluster of health conditions that put them at increased risk of diabetes and heart disease. The more weight a child gains, according to the study, the more likely the child is to develop dangerous medical

problems.

But the risks associated with obesity can be decreased with innovative research and prevention programs. That is why I added \$3 million to legislation to create the Center for Healthy Communities at West Virginia University. This important WVU effort builds on the work of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to help states and communities plan and launch programs targeting obesity.

Communities across the country are responding to the call and joining forces to fight obesity. Local partnerships including schools, hospitals, and community organizations are taking steps to encourage people to increase physical activity, add more healthy foods to their diets, and cut out other unhealthy habits which intensify the dangers of obesity.

West Virginians cannot ignore obesity-related health risks and repercussions. They must not allow themselves to be shaped by a modern environment that too often fosters inactivity and unhealthy eating habits. We need to create effective nutrition and physical activity programs that address obesity and other chronic diseases. The time is now to acknowledge the very real dangers of obesity and take steps to minimize them.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting a Piece of History

West Virginia is blessed with great natural and historical treasures. Places like the Monongahela National Forest, the New River Gorge, and the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge are among the crown jewels of West Virginia and are important tourist attractions. Just as critical are the lessons of history that abound throughout West Virginia. Point Pleasant has the distinction of being the site of the Revolutionary War's first land battle. Wheeling served as a jumping-off point for the famed Lewis and Clark expedition to the West.

One of West Virginia's most famous landmarks is Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. At the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers, Harpers Ferry played an important part in many events that helped to shape America.

Familiar names of history -- George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Meriwether Lewis, Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson, and Frederick Douglas -- are intertwined with the history of Harpers Ferry.

Key events -- such as the arrival of the first successful American railroad, John Brown's revolt against slavery, and one of the earliest integrated schools in the country -- are also part of the legacy of Harpers Ferry.

But that legacy needs protection.

Today, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park has nearly reached its capac-

ity. It cannot take steps to protect many historically unique sites without help. In an effort to provide that help, I have crafted legislation to expand Harpers Ferry National Historical Park by 1,240 acres, from its current 2,505 acres to 3,745 acres.

I am very happy to report that my legislation has passed the Senate, and recently was the subject of a committee hearing in the House of Representatives.

West Virginia Congressman Nick J. Rahall, who serves as the top Democratic member of the House Resources Committee, is working to guide this legislation through the House. At that hearing, he applauded the effort to expand the park, telling his colleagues, "Harpers Ferry is an incredibly powerful tool for telling the great story of our United States of America. These proposed additions will allow the Park to help us tell those stories even more completely." Congressman Rahall is absolutely right.

In the coming weeks, I hope that the full House of Representatives will move forward on my legislation to protect Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. This is an important bill for Harpers Ferry, for the Eastern Panhandle, and, in fact, for the nation. By expanding the park's boundaries, we can protect the rich historic and recreational opportunities that the park offers to residents and tourists alike.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Step Toward Expanded Health Insurance

In West Virginia, an estimated 286,000 people do not have health insurance. Nationally, almost 44 million Americans do not have medical coverage. These astounding statistics cannot be ignored any longer.

Finding ways to address this problem is not simple. But I have recently cosponsored legislation which I think could take a significant step toward reducing the number of uninsured Americans who go through life hoping and praying that they do not get sick or face a catastrophic medical problem.

The legislation that I am backing would allow for association health plans. These are plans where small businesses band together through a trade association to purchase health insurance. By joining together, small businesses will enjoy greater bargaining power, economies of scale, and lower administrative costs. This will result in lower health care costs and better insurance coverage options for small businesses and their employees.

Most Americans with health insurance obtain it through their employers, or a family member's employer, as a workplace benefit. Small employers, however, are far less likely than larger employers to have the financial resources to provide health insurance to their workers. In fact, almost half of the uninsured work for, or are family members

of employees who work for, small employers.

This legislation is one step that can be taken to open health care coverage to more Americans. It is not the be-all, end-all solution, but this legislation would help to move us toward a goal that we all share, namely, to reduce the number of Americans who do not have medical insurance.

Health care should not be a partisan issue. For me, it is an issue of basic quality of life.

Allowing small employers to obtain health benefits through associations will help to make coverage more affordable for far more Americans. Furthermore, association health plans will provide small employers with the ability to offer employees more choices of health plans, something that is nearly impossible to do with a small workforce.

With the number of uninsured Americans growing substantially each year, we must find ways to start to reverse that trend. Congress needs to act to provide small employers with options to secure health benefits for their workers and their families; we need to open the door to good-quality, affordable medical coverage for the millions of Americans currently without health insurance. While it is not the only step we can take, I believe that association health plans can be part of that solution.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Teaming to Improve Rural Health Care

America's Armed Forces and veterans deserve the highest quality medical care available. The same cutting-edge services that help to keep soldiers in top form also can reap benefits for civilian patients. That is why I have worked to ensure that West Virginians have access to a health care tool which previously was used only at the country's leading military hospital.

The experts at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., have developed an innovative program called HEALTHeFORCES. In their doctors' waiting rooms, patients use small computerized devices to answer questions about their illnesses and any health-related problems affecting their daily lives. This information helps doctors to better treat patients based on their full medical histories, rather than one particular symptom or illness.

Thanks to a collaborative effort I helped to initiate between Walter Reed, Marshall University, and the National Technology Transfer Center (NTTC), diabetic patients in Southern West Virginia are better managing their disease and enhancing their quality of life. Marshall's Byrd Center for Rural Health has adapted the HEALTHeFORCES program and launched HEALTHeWV at the Marshall University Medical Center and other rural clinics in Southern West Virginia. The NTTC, in turn, will lay the groundwork for the

program's implementation at other sites in the state and nation. HEALTHeWV is a shining example of linking national advancements with local expertise to meet West Virginia's health care needs.

While the HEALTHeWV program will likely address other chronic illnesses including heart and lung disease, diabetes patients were the logical first participants. Diabetics who participated in the military's HEALTHeFORCES program were far more likely to have appropriate testing and better test results. West Virginia's incidence of diabetes is 41 percent above the national average, impacting rural families and health care providers more than any other disease. Coordinating the multiple care components of this complex disease can be extremely difficult for rural physicians. I hope that HEALTHeWV's ability to document and track treatment plans will make doctors' jobs easier and patient care more effective.

For far too long, rural health care has meant inferior health care. I have worked throughout my years of public service to improve health care in all areas of the state. Programs such as HEALTHeWV allow patients to take an active role in their care, thereby helping to further the goal of health care equality. I look forward to the day when this latest technology allows chronically ill patients throughout West Virginia to receive better treatment and live better lives.

July 7, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Fighting Back Against Indecency

Radio stations broadcasting vulgar language by national personalities. Nudity shown during the tawdry halftime show of this year's Super Bowl. Music and movie stars using curse words at award shows during prime-time viewing hours. With increasing frequency, the broadcast industry is breaking industry guidelines as well as the public's trust, airing obscene or tasteless content that has no place on America's airwaves.

I believe that the public is forced to tolerate too much media programming that is morally unacceptable. I particularly deplore the exposure of children to such negative influences. Certainly, the vulnerability of young minds to these influences can contribute to a breakdown of the moral fiber of our country.

Courts have held that obscene speech is not protected by the First Amendment and cannot be broadcast at any time. Further, it is a violation of federal law to broadcast obscene, profane, or indecent programming. Unfortunately, the current maximum fine for broadcasters who disregard the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) guidelines on indecent programming is a drop in the bucket for today's multi-million dollar media moguls.

The U.S. Senate recently approved an amendment that I strongly supported to crack down on lewd television and radio programming. The amendment increases the maximum fine on broad-

casters who air indecent material from \$27,500 to \$275,000. This substantial increase will help to deter broadcasters from airing material that is not appropriate for, nor appealing to, the general public.

The amendment also calls for a one-year moratorium on the FCC's recent move to relax its rules governing media consolidation. The FCC's dangerous decision to lift the media ownership cap threatens to strangle diverse voices at virtually every level of the country's news and commentary. More than any other resource, local news outlets educate people about the issues that affect their daily lives. The new FCC rules would undermine that role by allowing one person or one corporate interest to control a significant level of discourse and debate.

Finally, the amendment addresses indecent broadcasting's impact on children by instructing the FCC to implement effective measures to curb violent programming during the hours with a predominantly young audience.

The job of raising young people in today's culture is difficult enough without their being overwhelmed by broadcasters with inappropriate, adult-oriented programming. By increasing penalties and utilizing technology and ratings systems to help reduce indecent content, I hope that this legislation will make the job of parenting a little easier.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Equal Benefits for the Guard and Reserve

The country's National Guard and Reserves have become more than a source of manpower during times of crisis. Members of the reserve components have become an indispensable tool to carry out military operations overseas and homeland security missions at home. They deserve the same benefits that are provided to all members of the military.

The men and women of the National Guard and Reserves place their lives on the line just like the men and women of the Active Duty forces. Bullets and bombs make no distinction. Yet, for too long, the military health care system has made a distinction. The National Guard and Reserves were not given access to the same health care as the regular military. That is why I am working with a bipartisan group of Senators to help America's citizen-soldiers receive better health care benefits.

As the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, I helped to shepherd legislation through the Senate to fund Guard and Reserve health benefits, including a temporary expansion of the TRICARE military health care program to members of the Guard and Reserves -- regardless of their activation status.

This is the first time that the Senate has appropriated funds to provide TRICARE

for Guardsmen and Reservists, even when they are not serving on active duty, and, frankly, it is a step that is long overdue. This should not be a question of if we should provide this benefit. These men and women have earned it.

The burdens being placed on our Guardsmen and Reservists and their families are heavy, particularly today with extended tours of duty for hundreds of thousands of citizen-soldiers in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other military operations around the world. Those burdens should not include trying to figure out how to pay for health care.

Under the legislation I supported, members of the National Guard and Reserves are eligible to enroll in TRICARE for a modest annual premium regardless of their deployment status. Premiums are about \$530 per year for individual coverage and \$1,860 per year for families. It is expected that the benefit will help to improve the quality of life for more than 300,000 Guard members, Reservists, and their family members.

More information about TRICARE is available by writing to the TRICARE Management Activity, 16401 E. Centretch Pkwy., Aurora, CO 80011-9043. Additional material is available from the TRICARE Internet site (www.tricare.osd.mil).



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Chemical Plant Dangers Spark Safety Investigation

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States has worked to prevent a tragedy from occurring again. We have made progress in areas like airplane security and emergency response preparedness, but there are many gaps that remain -- gaps that we must address before it is too late.

One gap is the lack of protection at 'critical infrastructure' sites. Critical infrastructure includes the systems that, if disrupted, would threaten our national security, public health and safety, economy, and way of life. Earlier this year, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the chief investigative arm of Congress, examined one specific segment of critical infrastructure -- reported that, despite voluntary efforts by individual companies to improve protections, the extent of security preparedness at chemical facilities across the country remains unknown.

In West Virginia, we are not immune from this responsibility. We have many sites that need to be fortified. We have many places that need to be protected. One of our largest vulnerabilities is also one of our key industries. It does not take great imagination to determine that the chemical plants that dot the Kanawha and Ohio rivers are also potential targets for attack.

But fortifying security at these facilities, according

to the Bush White House, is solely an industry responsibility. Despite the government's Constitutional responsibilities to provide for the safety and protection of the nation's citizens, the Bush Administration has consistently shifted the responsibility for 'critical infrastructure protection' to the private sector. The White House refuses to take the extra step to guard against attack -- a refusal that could cost lives if not fixed.

That is why I have asked the GAO to go back and determine what steps are being taken by the private sector to protect the American people, and what more needs to be done. Knowing and understanding what private sector industries are doing to protect critical infrastructure assets is essential in assessing the need for federal investments to protect the American people.

Protecting the American people from terrorist attack is a primary government responsibility. As we approach the third anniversary of the September 11 attacks, it is a responsibility that demands no further delay. The Bush Administration has, for too long, ignored the many holes in our homeland security protections. But just hoping that there will not be another attack is not enough; Congress must make the investments that protect the people, even if the President will not.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Black Colleges: Opening a Door to Achievement

The importance of education cannot be overstated. Horace Mann, a champion of America's public schools, said, "Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is a great equalizer of the conditions of men." Indeed, education is a key factor in the careers of most successful people. But there was a time in this nation's history when black Americans had few opportunities to further their education. The doors of many colleges and universities were closed to them.

Fortunately, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) filled the void. The first HBCU was founded in Pennsylvania in 1837. Today, across the country, there are 105 Historically Black Colleges and Universities serving an estimated 370,000 students. These schools make higher education financially attainable for individuals who otherwise may not be able to afford a college degree.

West Virginia is home to two of these institutions -- West Virginia State University in Institute and Bluefield State College in Bluefield. These schools and their HBCU partners have helped to make a significant difference not only to the State of West Virginia but also to all of America.

The successful record at these schools is impressive. HBCUs have educated 75 percent of all African-Americans with doctoral degrees, 46 percent of all black business executives, 50 percent of all black en-

gineers, and 80 percent of all black federal judges. It is difficult to imagine where this country would be without the service and dedication of the professors, administrators, and supporters of these schools.

With this record of success in mind, I joined Maryland Senator Paul Sarbanes in sponsoring a resolution recognizing the accomplishments and importance of our nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities. That resolution recently won unanimous approval in the Senate.

These schools continue to demonstrate their value. According to the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, HBCU students graduate with greater frequency than African-American students at predominantly white institutions, and they receive greater academic and social support at HBCUs.

I have long believed that an education is one's passport to progress. It leads to new opportunities, not only for an individual but also for our state and nation. Historically Black Colleges and Universities have taken the lead in reaching out to students who, too often, are left behind or pushed to the side. In doing so, they have helped to build a stronger America. These institutions are an important piece of higher education in America. I applaud them for their successful past, and will continue to work for their future achievements.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Heritage of Hard Work: Labor Day 2004

The first Monday in September is set aside each year to recognize the dignity of work and to thank American workers for their contributions to making a better and stronger country. It is a special day when men and women from all vocations join in celebration and recreation.

Labor Day is an old and honorable American tradition. In 1893, legislation was introduced in Congress to establish Labor Day as a federal holiday. The next year, President Grover Cleveland signed the legislation into law, and today, 110 years later, we still use this day to honor those who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow.

This Labor Day, it is most appropriate to recognize some of West Virginia's outstanding labor leaders and their contributions to American labor history and to our beloved state.

Frank Keeney, Fred Mooney, and Bill Blizzard were rank-and-file leaders of Southern West Virginia coal miners in the early 20th century who helped to lay the foundation for the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) in our state. Arnold Miller of Cabin Creek was a leader in the black lung movement in the 1960's who was elected president of that great union. Current UMWA president Cecil Roberts also hails from Cabin Creek.

John Easton of William-

stown in Wood County was a flint glass worker who served as president of the West Virginia State Federation of Labor during the 1920's and as an official in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the 1930's.

Miles Stanley of Dunbar was president of his local steelworkers union and helped to negotiate the merger that formed the West Virginia AFL-CIO, of which he served as president from 1957 to 1974.

Ned Guthrie of Morgantown and later Charleston was the national legislative director of the American Federation of Musicians Union in the 1980's and was instrumental in bringing collective bargaining rights to that profession.

And there was the great Walter Reuther from Wheeling, who was president of the United Auto Workers in 1946, president of the CIO in 1952, and vice president of the AFL-CIO in 1955. He was an important advisor to a number of Democratic presidents, especially John F. Kennedy.

This Labor Day, I thank all West Virginia workers. The work they do each day, whether mining coal, pumping gas, cutting meat in a grocery store, or serving the public, is important. West Virginia's history boasts many well-known labor leaders, but it is all of us, working together, that combine to make America a great nation.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Skewed Tax Policy Needs Fixing

When George W. Bush campaigned for the presidency in 2000, he talked a great deal about tax cuts. Once he took office, he rammed through some of the biggest tax cuts in the nation's history -- tax cuts which most benefit the wealthiest of Americans. It is a tax plan that does little to help working West Virginians.

By focusing on massive tax cuts for the wealthy first, President Bush squandered a great opportunity to improve America. The President came into office with a \$5.6 trillion surplus. He is preparing to end this term with a deficit of \$2.9 trillion. That incredible turnaround wasted the chance to make significant investments in education, fix Social Security, and strengthen Medicare. Instead of saving for the long-term and making sound investments in America, the Bush Administration chose to squander the surplus that had been handed to them in good faith.

Recently, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), whose director served as the top economist in the Bush White House, highlighted the disparity of the President's tax cuts. According to the CBO, one-third of the tax cuts have been directed to people in the top 1 percent income bracket, who earn an average of \$1.2 million annually. The report calculated that households with incomes in that top 1 percent bracket were receiv-

ing an average tax cut of \$78,460 this year. In fact, for this year, the average tax cut for those American households with the highest incomes is more than seventy times the tax cut for middle-income households.

That kind of disparity places an unfair burden on working families. Already, the Bush Administration has slashed funding for programs that are important to families in West Virginia: funding for classroom initiatives has been erased; veterans are forced to wait in long lines for health care; seniors are told, in essence, that the best Medicare prescription drug coverage that the government can afford is a maze of paperwork and a small menu of choices. These and other problems go without solutions because of the skewed tax policies of this Bush White House.

Every politician likes to vote to cut taxes. But, when the tax cuts are massive and unfair, the flip-side to that vote is less funding for initiatives like education, health care, transportation, and worker safety, all of which benefit families and regular Americans. President Bush has his priorities wrong. The Administration's economic policy is broken. Instead of irresponsible tax cuts for the privileged that have resulted in oceans of red ink, we ought to invest in the future of this nation by promoting policies that benefit all Americans.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Building for an Innovation Economy in West Virginia

In May 1961, President Kennedy challenged America to be the first nation to put a man on the moon. It was an ambitious goal, for the United States was far behind the Soviet Union in the space race. The Soviets launched Sputnik, the first man-made satellite to orbit Earth, in October 1957, and had made significant advancements in the years after that accomplishment. But America relied on innovation and hard work to overcome the obstacles. The effort paid off when Neil Armstrong took the first steps on the moon on July 20, 1969.

Today, America's economy faces significant hurdles. Jobs are disappearing. Workers feel caught in a downward spiral. Health care costs skyrocket while wages stagnate.

America can do better. In the 21st century, the nation must have an innovation economy, one that relies on mind-power as much as muscle. At its core, the innovation economy will build on ideas and technologies. Our country must adapt to the changing realities of the global marketplace and respond with creative approaches to job creation and growth.

The seeds for an innovation economy have been planted across West Virginia.

For example, in Harrison County, the FBI Complex, which I helped to

bring to West Virginia beginning in 1990 and which employs more than 2,600 men and women, has served as a magnet for other high-tech investments, both private and public. The FBI Complex and the NASA Independent Verification and Validation Center in neighboring Marion County, which I helped to bring to the Mountain State in 1991, has served as the backbone for the West Virginia High-Tech Corridor. Businesses have started and expanded along that Corridor, merging creativity and technology to carve their niche.

Southern West Virginia can look to the early success of developments in the City of Hinton as a model. The Summers County community has invested funding and effort to foster a new commitment to technology jobs, and companies have responded. Two firms -- Computer Sciences Corporation and ManTech Corporation -- already employ more than 100 people in Hinton. I have partnered with community and business leaders to help make this venture a success.

Like the America of the 1960s which relied on knowledge and perseverance to lead the way to the moon, the America of the 21st century must also adapt to new challenges. The world will not stand still. We must find innovative ways to move our economy forward.

August 25, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Don't Gamble with Social Security

Once again, a presidential candidate is talking about gambling with the future of Social Security. Unfortunately, the candidate floating these bad ideas is the same candidate who, as president, has squandered the best opportunity in decades to cement the promise of Social Security for generations to come.

From modest beginnings in 1935, Social Security has become an essential facet of modern life. Today, one in seven Americans receives a Social Security benefit. But when the baby-boomer generation begins to retire, the cost of the benefits of retirees will exceed the contributions of workers paying into the system. That will place a much greater financial strain on the Social Security system which, if left unaddressed, could jeopardize retirement and disability benefits for tens of millions of Americans.

But rather than address the fundamental problem, the Bush White House talks about privatizing Social Security while wasting any opportunity to responsibly secure America's primary retirement and disability program. In fact, instead of ensuring the Social Security benefits promised to workers, the President has proposed spending the entire Social Security surplus of the next five years -- \$1.1 trillion -- to pay for tax cuts

for the affluent and corporate elite. Not one dime would be allocated to save Social Security.

Everyone has a stake in the future of Social Security. It provides a safety net for retirees, workers with disabilities, and children who have lost a parent. Social Security can be the difference between living with dignity or living in poverty.

I will continue to push for sensible approaches to strengthen Social Security, not ill-conceived fiscal plans that jeopardize its future. Congress must anticipate the looming retirement of the baby-boomer generation and plan for it. That means eliminating the massive federal deficits sparked by the Bush White House's fiscal priorities of tax cuts above all else, and putting the people's priorities first. Instead of short-sighted proposals and campaign slogans that gamble with the long-term stability of Social Security, it is time for serious debate about the future of the program.

In 1935, when President Franklin Roosevelt signed the law creating the Social Security system, he recognized its importance. He stated that Social Security would "give some measure of protection to the average citizen and to his family against the loss of a job and against poverty-ridden old age." We must not allow that protection to fail.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A White House Roadblock to Safe Highways

Across the country, safe, modern roads are key to economic growth and crucial to saving lives. In West Virginia, where the roads too often are narrow passages between mountains, modern roads and highways are vital. Modern roads save lives; they make trips to school and to work far less dangerous; and they help to attract new jobs to far-reaching parts of the state.

Throughout West Virginia, road and highway improvements are a high priority. Updating and expanding Route 35 is key to Mason and Putnam counties. Completing Corridor H is important for people in Central and Eastern West Virginia. Building the Mon-Fayette Expressway will help to improve travel in North Central West Virginia. And progress on the Coalfields Expressway and the King Coal Highway is a priority for residents in Southern West Virginia. Throughout the state, residents understand a simple truth: modern roads make for a better quality of life.

Recognizing the same truth, the Senate has overwhelmingly passed legislation called the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act. Because of my efforts, that legislation provides \$2.575 billion for West Virginia highway construction -- \$715 million above the current highway funding law. This invest-

ment would mean progress and jobs. The legislation would lead to fewer lives lost in traffic accidents. It would mean a fresh infusion of dollars for projects that have been in the works for many years, projects that West Virginians are ready to see become reality.

Despite the urgent need, the Bush White House has threatened to veto this legislation. Instead of supporting the Senate plan which has strong backing among Democratic and Republican Senators, the Bush Administration would rather play political games. It is time for the games to end. America needs these funds for safer roads and new jobs. Jeopardizing the safety and quality of life for Americans is not the hallmark of leadership; rather, it is the hallmark of an administration that is out of step with the needs of America's families.

A modern, efficient highway network is one of West Virginia's most pressing needs and a cornerstone of economic development. Safe roads save lives while promoting job creation. While it will be extremely difficult to accomplish under this short-sighted veto threat by the Bush White House, I will continue to press for legislation to make the improvements that are so necessary to our state's roads and highways. West Virginians, who have been waiting all too long for these better, safer roads, deserve nothing less.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Standing Firm for Steel Communities

Since 1997, the American steel industry has been in crisis -- a crisis that continues today. Waves of unfairly subsidized and dumped foreign steel imports have washed away entire steel communities. Ripple effects are causing severe hardships for families throughout America.

In response, injured companies and workers continue to bring charges of illegal trade against foreign countries, and many countries are found in violation of trade agreements. As a result, the U.S. International Trade Commission and the Department of Commerce impose financial penalties on those steel products.

Under the law in 2000, these penalties were deposited in the U.S. Treasury to be used for general government programs. Injured companies and the workers who were laid-off or saw their pensions and health care slashed were left to fend for themselves. The government profited from their hardship. That simply was not right.

In response, I worked with a bipartisan group of Senators to help these workers and companies. Through what is commonly called the Byrd Amendment, penalties collected from trade partners violating the law are now available to those Americans injured by the violation. It simply makes sense.

If a driver is found at fault in a traffic accident, that driver has to pay to repair the other automobile

and help the other driver. Thanks to the Byrd Amendment, the same logic is applied to trade violations.

Despite this logic, the World Trade Organization (WTO) recently ruled that the European Union and other U.S. trade partners can retaliate against the Byrd Amendment. This ruling is outrageous. The WTO and these foreign countries want to stop the Byrd Amendment from helping hundreds of American companies, workers, and entire communities injured by unfair trade.

Our foreign trade partners fail to admit that there is a far simpler way for the fines under the Byrd Amendment to disappear: They can follow the rules. If these countries do not violate trade agreements, illegally subsidize products, or allow products to be dumped on American shores, the U.S. government will not levy duties on their products. But our trade partners want to continue to violate the law and chip away at America's economic base. They want to do the crime but not do the time.

This is a time of tremendous economic uncertainty. The United States faces stalled economic growth, a stagnant stock market, and the largest trade and budget deficits in history. Congress ought not allow the WTO to undercut one of the few federal trade initiatives that helps, rather than hurts, America's working families.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting a Piece of History

For many years, I have worked with men and women in West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle to find a way to protect the history and the heritage of one of our state's jewels -- Harpers Ferry National Historical Park (NHP).

Harpers Ferry is one of the most unique places in West Virginia. This one location has been home to many of the country's Founding Fathers and some of our notable thinkers. It has been the site for key events in almost every period of our history, including the Revolutionary War, the Lewis and Clark expedition to the West, and the Civil War. Harpers Ferry NHP is also among the most beautiful places in our state, set at the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers. Sunsets at Harpers Ferry are simply magnificent.

Yet, this history was jeopardized by pressures from the ever-expanding urban sprawl from Washington, D.C. The land surrounding the Park was being swallowed up, and with it many significant historical sites. The National Park Service was unable to respond and purchase additional acres because the Park was nearing its maximum capacity. It would have been against the law for the Park Service to acquire any sizeable parcels of land.

With this concern in

mind, and with the encouragement of residents of the surrounding communities, I started work to expand and improve Harpers Ferry NHP. I shepherded funds through Congress for the purchase of the Murphy Farm property adjacent to the Park and facilitated the acquisition of the historic U.S. Armory Grounds in Harpers Ferry. Now, I am pleased to report, Congress has approved unanimously legislation I wrote to extend the Park's boundary by 1,240 acres, from its current 2,505 acres to 3,745 acres. This expansion plan has gathered broad public support as well as the support of groups, including the Friends of Harpers Ferry, the Harpers Ferry Conservancy, and the Civil War Preservation Trust.

The story of Harpers Ferry is really the story of America. In one setting, several themes in America's story converge: exploration, industry and transportation, the question of slavery, the Civil War, and the natural splendor of our nation. The Park tells the stories of people and events that influenced the course of history and made the nation what it is today.

I am proud that this important legislation is on the verge of becoming law. We have an obligation to protect and enrich such a special place so that its lessons and legacy will live on for generations to come.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting West Virginia's Wonderful Wild

"Oh, the West Virginia hills! How majestic and how grand." These words, from "The West Virginia Hills," one of the Mountain State's official songs, capture the sentiment not only of West Virginia natives but also of the thousands of tourists who flock to the state to view its scenic wonders.

West Virginia is a place where one can see and feel and hear nature without interruptions from the hectic outside world. It is a place where parents and children, young and old, can experience diverse wildlife, rushing waters, and thriving vegetation firsthand. I have long sought to preserve our state's God-given treasures. These wild lands remain relatively as the Creator made them with the help of legislation that recently celebrated its 40th birthday.

In 1964, Congress passed the Wilderness Act to protect wilderness areas throughout the country by restricting grazing, mining, timber cutting, and mechanized vehicles in these regions. By safeguarding the ecological, scenic, and scientific value of America's wilderness, we preserve it for future generations. I am one of only three remaining senators who cast a vote in favor of the historic legislation. I am proud that the 9.1 million acres originally designated as protected wilderness areas 40 years ago has grown to more than

105 million acres in 44 states.

In West Virginia, wilderness areas are some of the more popular destinations for residents and visitors alike. Dolly Sods, Otter Creek, Cranberry, Laurel Fork North, and Laurel Fork South Wilderness Areas are unique reminders of the beauty of nature and the handiwork of the Creator.

I recently received a letter from Mrs. Margaret Baker of Hillsboro who wrote of "how important wilderness areas are to the quality of life in West Virginia." Writing about West Virginia's Cranberry Wilderness Area, she explains that, in this special place "you can take your children here and actually see what nature looks like when it's not in a neatly labeled museum exhibit, when the animals aren't in cages and the trees aren't trimmed into perfect little bricketts of shrubbery."

Mrs. Baker is absolutely right.

It was West Virginia's natural wonders that inspired these words: "If o'er sea o'er land I roam, Still I'll think of happy home, And my friends among the West Virginia hills." I will continue my efforts in the Senate to protect these many examples of our state's scenic beauty that lie nestled within the West Virginia hills and ensure that they survive for generations to come.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

West Virginia Veterans Need Help

West Virginians have a proud record of service in the United States Armed Forces. The famed General Stonewall Jackson hailed from present-day West Virginia. Chuck Yeager, the World War II ace and first man to travel faster than sound, is a proud West Virginian. Staff Sergeant Junior Spurrer from Bluefield was the second most decorated American soldier in World War II.

There are many more West Virginians who served the nation but whose names will not be recorded in the great military histories of our country. These veterans have asked little of their country. They expect only that the government provide them with the benefits they earned in service to their country.

But, time and time again, the Bush White House has turned its back on veterans. When choosing between budget-busting tax cuts or funding veterans programs, the Administration has cut taxes for America's super-wealthy instead of taking care of America's veterans.

For the last three years, Congress tried to increase veterans benefits by allowing military retirees to keep all of their Veterans Administration (VA) disability checks and military retirement pay. But the Bush White House fought against funds for

veterans and even threatened to veto a \$396 billion defense bill to prevent veterans from receiving their due compensation.

This year, President Bush approved plans to close or cut services at veterans hospitals across the country. The Beckley VA Medical Center, which serves 40,000 veterans in Southern West Virginia, narrowly missed the President's chopping block. The Beckley facility was saved only with a last-minute intervention by Senator Rockefeller, Representative Rahall, and myself.

Last year, the Bush Administration decided that an entire category of veterans should no longer be eligible to seek health care from the VA. As a result, more than 520,000 veterans will be barred from VA hospitals. The Bush Administration also wants to double the cost of prescription drugs for thousands of veterans while increasing their doctor visit fees by 33 percent and sticking them with new annual enrollment fees.

West Virginia's veterans know about sacrifice. They have given much in service to this country. Yet, the Bush White House wants veterans to give up more and more of their hard-earned benefits. The Administration ought to stick up for veterans instead of sticking them with a bigger health care bill.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Farmington, a Tragic Reminder

November marks the 36th anniversary of the tragic Farmington Mine Disaster. It was this mine disaster, in which 78 coal miners lost their lives, that prompted Congress to pass the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969 -- the most comprehensive mine health and safety legislation to date. In addition to enacting new, stronger safety and enforcement provisions, the 1969 act protected America's coal miners from Black Lung by limiting their exposure to coal dust.

The anniversary of the Farmington Mine Disaster is an unfortunate reminder that the struggles of American labor have been a fight for safer working conditions as well as better wages, shorter hours, and job security. It also is a reminder that our federal government must be committed to making America's coal mines safer.

This message seems lost on the Bush Administration, which has championed the most anti-labor policies in more than a century. The Bush White House has proposed increasing the allowable level of coal mine dust, reversing the 1969 act and needlessly exposing miners to Black Lung. Furthermore, the Administration has proposed killing a host of mine-safety regulations, including rules necessary to protect miners from toxic chemicals.

The Bush White House assault on American workers hardly ends with coal miners. The Administration has cut funding for needed job training programs. It is blocking efforts to provide unemployment benefits to jobless workers. It is stripping many workers of their right to overtime pay. It is repealing safety rules necessary for the protection of American workers. It has attacked the civil service system. It has sought to weaken collective bargaining rights.

Under this Administration's watch, 2.5 million good-paying manufacturing jobs, including several thousand in West Virginia, have disappeared. On average, 34,000 jobs a month are being shipped overseas.

Today, when the real value of the minimum wage is sinking to record lows, the Bush Administration has trapped millions of workers in poverty by blocking congressional efforts to raise the standard of living for working Americans.

When the great American labor leader Samuel Gompers was asked what labor wanted, he had a simple answer, "more." President Bush has answered with more -- more for big oil, more for big insurance companies, more for the well-connected high rollers -- but, sadly, less for America's working families.

October 13, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Leaving West Virginia Children Behind

At Raleigh County's Mark Twain High School, I was one of 28 students in my 1934 graduating class. At Mark Twain, there was no question of accountability. The teachers were in charge. The students were there to study. The goal was to learn and always strive to make yourself smarter tomorrow than you are today.

Sadly, too often today, that same emphasis is not placed on teaching and learning. Parents know it. Members of Congress know it. That's why we voted to create the No Child Left Behind Act. Congress and President Bush worked together to ensure greater accountability in America's schools. We established standards and promised increased resources to help schools reach those standards and surpass them. But, to date, funding No Child Left Behind has been a Bush Administration empty promise.

Since President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act into law in 2002, not one Bush Administration budget has provided the funds that America's schools expected. In fact, nationwide, the Bush White House has shortchanged schools by \$33 billion. The Administration trumpets No Child Left Behind, but fails miserably when funding it.

For example, the federal Title One initiative provides dollars geared specifically for children from poor school districts. About half of West

Virginia's public schools receive Title I funding. While the President's No Child Left Behind Act promised West Virginia schools \$154 million for Title I for 2005, the Bush Administration's budget slashed that funding by more than \$55 million--a 36 percent cut. Translated into students, it would deny full services to 18,398 West Virginia children. Evidently, "Leave Only 18,398 Children Behind" was not a catchy enough title for the new law.

When President Bush signed No Child Left Behind, he said, "There's no greater challenge than to make sure that every single child, regardless of where they live, how they're raised, the income level of their family, every child receive a first-class education in America."

But what the President said and what the President does has proved to be vastly different. When it comes to America's schools and keeping the promise of No Child Left Behind, the Bush White House gets an "F."

If there is one federal investment that can offer real dividends down the road, it is education. It is time to end the posturing and give students and teachers the resources that they need to succeed. It is time for an Administration that will not play games with America's kids. Our schools and our children cannot afford four more years of broken promises.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Powering Job Growth in the New Century

In this century, West Virginia and the country will need to rely on innovation in order to create new jobs and new economic opportunities. In fact, innovation will be the key to whether we are able to lead or whether we stagnate. In a world where production costs are vastly different among countries, the one factor that will set the United States apart is our ability to generate new ideas and new approaches to meet demands.

In West Virginia, many of those innovations will be spurred by the National Technology Transfer Center (NTTC) at Wheeling Jesuit University. The NTTC provides technology management services that turn knowledge into value for the benefit of its clients. The group matches public needs with government research and development.

The U.S. Department of State is the most recent beneficiary of the work at the NTTC. The State Department has placed an order for 3,000 "HazMat Smart-Strips" -- a chemical-detection warning badge for emergency responders that was commercialized with assistance from the NTTC.

The Smart-Strip, produced at Wheeling-based Printech, is a \$20 strip of vinyl and paper that changes color when exposed to hazardous chemicals such as chlorine, fluoride, nerve agents, oxidizers, arsenic,

sulfides, and cyanide in liquid or aerosol form. A change in color in any of the eight categories alerts users to exposure, directing a responder to get additional gear, to decontaminate, or to evacuate the area.

Fire departments, hazardous materials technicians, law enforcement officers, branches of the military, consumers, and even communities located near chemical plants have ordered thousands of the baseball-card-sized Smart-Strips since they appeared on the market last year.

The Smart-Strip is an example of the innovation that will help to drive our economy in the 21st Century. The market for new ideas and new techniques never dries up. The push for better, faster, stronger, more affordable technologies will always drive the economy, and there is no reason why West Virginia cannot hold the keys to keep that engine running.

For decades, West Virginia's economy has relied on the strength of our arms and backs. Coal mining. Steel production. Chemical manufacturing. Those sectors of our economy will always be vital. But we also must use the strength of our minds and seek new opportunities to create jobs and lift our state. Innovations like the HazMat Smart-Strip will help to lead the way.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

WV Guard Rises to the Challenge Again

As the saying goes, if a job is worth doing, it is worth doing well. The West Virginia National Guard has proved time and again that it abides by these wise words. The citizens of the Mountain State and America's troops around the world are safer because of the efforts of these brave men and women. Whether it be a devastating flood at home or the seemingly endless tours of duty in Iraq, they are always ready to answer the call.

With top-notch performance comes increased responsibility. The West Virginia Air National Guard's 167th Airlift Wing in Martinsburg has been selected for an important new role in the nation's defense. Beginning in 2007, the 167th's current fleet of twelve C-130 aircraft will be replaced with a new fleet of ten C-5 planes, which are among the largest aircraft in the world. The C-5's massive payload capability has made the aircraft an invaluable part of U.S. Air Force military and humanitarian efforts for the past 20 years.

Preparations are underway to ready the 167th Airlift Wing for the arrival of its newest charges, but much work remains to be

done. I recently advanced funding that will further the construction projects to help transform the base into a suitable home for the C-5s. The more than \$56 million in C-5 planning, design, and construction funds I guided through Congress this year and the more than \$40 million I added to legislation in past years will help to lay the groundwork for the 167th's important new mission.

The benefits of the Martinsburg Air National Guard Base's new assignment will extend beyond the 167th's borders. With the C-5s, comes new jobs and expanded infrastructure for the Eastern Panhandle. More than 100 additional positions will be filled, and the base's increased economic impact will provide a boost for the entire region.

The 167th Airlift Wing has long been recognized as one of the best trained units in the nation. They serve with the same dedication and perseverance exemplified by West Virginians in all branches of the nation's Armed Services. I remain committed to providing General Tackett and his units with the resources they need to continue their impeccable record of accomplishment.

November 3, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Staying Healthy in Flu Season

The country's current shortage of flu vaccines has dominated news headlines and caused widespread concern. The insufficient vaccine supply has left hundreds of thousands of high-risk Americans scrambling for the scant doses. The more that West Virginians know about the shortage, the more likely they will be to stay healthy this flu season.

The flu shot scarcity is due largely to the closure of one of the major flu vaccine producer's overseas plants. Federal health agencies are working to identify new vaccine sources to help fill the shortage. Medical experts recommend that West Virginians who fall in the high-risk category should take measures to get vaccinated as additional doses become available. Experts further suggest that those in low-risk categories should not get vaccinated but should take precautions to help protect their health during the flu season.

Specifically, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that the following groups of people should have top priority for receiving the flu vaccine: adults 65 years of age or older; children between the ages of 6 and 23 months; children on chronic aspirin therapy; caregivers for infants younger than 6 months; health care staff that work with patients; pregnant women; women

who expect to be pregnant during flu season; and all nursing home residents. In addition, anyone with chronic medical conditions, regardless of age, should be vaccinated.

It is important for high-risk West Virginians to stay informed about the quantity of flu shots available locally. State health officials have announced that the vaccine will be distributed based on demand. High-risk individuals should contact their doctors or local health departments to inquire about the availability of the vaccine in their areas.

West Virginians in the low-risk groups who do not receive the vaccine can still take steps to stay healthy during the winter months. The CDC advises everyone to eat balanced meals with the recommended amounts of vitamins and minerals, get a proper amount of exercise, minimize contact with people who are sick, stay home from work or school if sick, and wash hands regularly to help ward off the flu and other ailments.

All West Virginians can be advocates for their own health. For more information on flu vaccine supplies, they can call the West Virginia Immunization Program at 304-558-2188 or 800-642-3634. The right mix of persistence and precaution can help all of us to stay healthy in the coming months.

November 10, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Time to Count Our Blessings

From its first celebration, when the Pilgrims sat down with American Indians to commemorate the plentiful harvest, to when Abraham Lincoln declared it an official holiday after the Civil War, Thanksgiving has always been a time to remember the blessings of the Creator.

This Thanksgiving is a time to reflect upon the many things we take for granted.

We have much for which we may offer thanks. We may celebrate the food on our tables, the roofs over our heads, and the friends and family with whom we share our meal. We may be thankful for our health, or for having the strength and support to deal with our afflictions. We may be thankful for the great nation in which we live, still a land of plenty and a land of great opportunity.

In this hotly contested election year, we may be grateful that we have a process of selecting our leaders in which everyone can participate, and which peacefully and securely affects the transfer of elected power. However one may

feel about the outcome of the election, it is still a vastly preferable system to that which exists in many other nations. The nightly news is full of stories, from the Ivory Coast to the Gaza Strip, which offer object lessons in how not to transition leadership. We are blest to be Americans.

In a year punctuated by war, we may offer our prayers and our gratitude to the many men and women who have lost their lives in Afghanistan and Iraq for the sacrifice that they have made for the nation.

To the gravely wounded and mentally tormented who have returned from this war, we may pray for their speedy recovery.

To those men and women still serving overseas, we may pray for a safe return.

To those families who are separated by war from loved ones this holiday, we may offer our heartfelt support.

And to everyone who will travel this Thanksgiving to be with family and friends, I wish a safe journey and a happy holiday filled with spiritual blessings, fellowship, and love.

November 17, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Hope for Healing the Mind

Oh, the wonders of the human mind! Infinite in possibility and unique in capacity, it is surely God's greatest creation. The mind is a soaring and powerful force, able to produce incredible beauty. But all too often, the great gifts of the mind are seized by Alzheimer's Disease, depression, schizophrenia, or other maladies that prey upon the brain. Soon, West Virginia will become home to one of the world's major centers for research into these neurological illnesses.

I recently joined Senator Jay Rockefeller and Governor Bob Wise at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Blanchette Rockefeller Neurosciences Institute at West Virginia University (WVU). This collaborative effort between WVU and Johns Hopkins University is named for Senator Rockefeller's mother who suffered from Alzheimer's Disease until her death in 1992. The Institute will be the largest scientific research venture in the history of West Virginia and the only major research institute in the world to focus on human memory.

Many families have been personally touched by the suffering caused by Alzheimer's or other cognitive diseases. The pain of watching the mind and memory of a loved one slip away is unbearable. The slow loss of the ability to recognize one's spouse,

child, or grandchild is one of the cruelest blows for victims and their families.

I am particularly moved by the personal story of Blanchette Rockefeller and her struggle with Alzheimer's Disease. I admire Senator Rockefeller and his family for having generously contributed more than \$15 million dollars of their own money to carry out the noble mission of the new Institute.

I am gratified to have been able to secure federal funds for the construction of the Institute. Also, as the senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I have helped to double the level of funding for the National Institutes of Health. This increase strengthens the federal government's commitment to advancing biomedical science and helps to create a bridge between ideas, the laboratory, and most importantly, the patient.

I am humbled by the many miracles of science that I have witnessed in just my lifetime. Each year, experts discover new cures and treatments for such illnesses as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, depression, and many more. Many of these scientific advances were achieved in the past century. I take great pride in knowing that discoveries of the next century are sure to take place at the Blanchette Rockefeller Neurosciences Institute.

November 24, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Backbone for Job Growth

In 1947, when I began my public service in the West Virginia House of Delegates, there were only four miles of divided, four-lane highway in the entire state. Four miles! In fact, there were so few miles that they were not recorded on the state roadmap that year. It took several hours to travel round-trip between Beckley and Charleston. Getting to the Eastern Panhandle from Southern West Virginia took an entire day. Commerce stalled because West Virginia's road and highway system was, as the *Saturday Evening Post* noted in a February 1960 edition, "decades behind that of its neighbors."

When I was elected to Congress in 1952, I made it a goal to turn that situation around. Today, more than a half-century later, I am proud to report that West Virginia has made significant progress.

By the end of this year, the West Virginia Department of Transportation estimates that there will be more than 1,300 miles of divided, four-lane highways throughout the state. These miles are in every region of the state, from I-68 in North Central West Virginia to I-77 in our western counties. Corridor Highways, promised by the federal government 39 years ago as part of the Appalachian Development Highway System, now crisscross West Virginia. Throughout the state, as miles long-planned

are finally paved, progress follows close behind.

There is still considerable work ahead. Route Nine in the Eastern Panhandle; U.S. 35 in Mason and Putnam counties; the Coalfields Expressway, Route Ten, and the King Coal Highway in Southern West Virginia; the Mon-Fayette Expressway in North Central West Virginia; Corridor H in the Potomac Highlands -- these are all ongoing high-priority projects.

To that end, using my position as the senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I have added hundreds of millions of dollars to legislation to speed the completion of these highways. Soon, the President will sign legislation containing more than \$417 million that I obtained for West Virginia highway construction this year. I am proud of that work, and look forward to the day when each of these projects is completed.

In West Virginia, we understand the importance of modern roads. They make for safe travel to school and to work. New highways create new job opportunities. Throughout the state, residents understand a simple truth; namely, modern roads make for a better quality of life.

In the Senate, I will continue my efforts to construct West Virginia's highways and, importantly, build the backbone for progress in the 21st century.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Bringing Doctors to the Children

In many parts of rural West Virginia, a trip to the doctor for a check-up is anything but routine, and specialized medical care can be hours away from home. For children, this is especially dangerous. Vaccinations are missed. Early signs of medical problems go undetected. That's why I have worked throughout my career in the U.S. Senate to expand health care opportunities for all West Virginians, and especially for our children.

The latest effort comes thanks to Marshall University's Byrd Center for Rural Health. Already, the Center provides medical services to West Virginians who do not live near hospitals or clinics. The Center's mission is to get past the geographic isolation that serves as a barrier to health care in rural communities. Technology plays a key role in that effort.

For instance, the Center for Rural Health, in a partnership that I helped to start with the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the NASA National Technology Transfer Center based at Wheeling Jesuit University, has introduced an initiative called HEALTHeWV. Through this effort, patients use small computerized devices to answer questions about their illnesses and any health-related problems affecting their daily lives. This information helps doctors to better treat patients based on their full medical

histories, rather than on one particular symptom or illness.

Now, the Byrd Center is expanding its reach to young people with a mobile medical unit specifically geared for children. Utilizing \$1 million that I recently added to federal legislation, this traveling doctor's office brings medical professionals directly to the children who need them most. This funding will help to ensure that this important initiative is able to expand its medical services and treat more children in Southern West Virginia.

When children receive proper medical care, they are more likely to avoid serious health conditions later in life. Marshall's mobile medical unit provides immunizations, routine check-ups, physicals, and sick visits to thousands of young people each year. Children are healthier because of the care they receive at the mobile facility, and soon more West Virginia children will benefit.

Access to quality health care is an essential part of life for all Americans, but is often a challenge for those living in rural areas. That's why initiatives like HEALTHeWV and the Marshall University mobile medical unit are so important. These efforts break through the barriers of isolation in rural communities and ensure that health care is available throughout our state.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Celebrating the True Christmas Story

Christmas is one of my favorite times of the year, a time of joy and love, of family gatherings and warm memories. Over time, however, Christmas has become more about big store sales and shopping malls rather than the birth of Jesus. The meaning of Christmas is overshadowed by the pressures and strains of a commercialized holiday.

At its core, Christmas will always be about a couple who found no shelter but a manger, and also about a newborn child who would become the Savior of the world.

That is why, each year at this time, I reread the Christmas story in the Gospel of Luke. My Christmas wish is that all of us will remember the words and, more importantly, the true meaning of this sacred season.

"All went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

"And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her

firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

"And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Perhaps, with a greater focus on family and faith than on gadgets and glitter, the materialism of Christmas will fade and we can truly understand the great and glorious meaning of Christmas.

My wife Erma and I wish for all West Virginians a happy and holy Christmas and New Year.

December 15, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting an American Symbol

The American Bald Eagle has long been the living symbol of freedom and liberty and the unshakable spirit of the American people. In 1782, the Second Continental Congress officially designated the Bald Eagle as the National Emblem of the United States. A species unique to North America and once very plentiful, the Bald Eagle population dropped to endangered levels by the 1960s. Fortunately, strong protection laws and conservation efforts have brought this majestic bird back from the brink of extinction, and I am pleased to have helped to guide through Congress legislation to help ensure the continued, long-term growth of the eagle population.

While the national bird is currently classified as a threatened species, it is expected that it will be removed from the endangered species list in the near future. The Bald Eagle would still be protected under existing federal and state regulations but little state or federal funding is available for that purpose. Significant funding will be required to monitor the Bald Eagle population for five years, as specified for delisted species under the

Endangered Species Act.

The bill I cosponsored authorizes the United States Mint to create and market a special three-coin set that will commemorate the recovery and revival of the American eagle. The money collected from the sale of the coin set will be placed in an American Eagle Fund, and interest from that fund will support ongoing eagle care efforts, as well as the monitoring and protection programs established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Bald Eagle is a noble symbol of our Republic which has endured significant challenges to its survival. I commend the conservation efforts that have helped to return our symbol of freedom to the skies. There are now more than 5,000 nesting pairs and 20,000 total Bald Eagles in the lower 48 states and more than 35,000 Bald Eagles in Alaska.

I am proud to have supported legislation which celebrates the eagles' recovery and ensures that, as the eagle moves off the endangered species list, resources are in place to help keep the population healthy for decades to come.

December 22, 2004



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting the Medicaid Safety Net

The federal government is running in the red. Under the Bush Administration, federal deficits have reached record levels, and now the White House is scrambling to find ways to cut back. One area that I fear could be unwisely targeted is the Medicaid program -- a health care safety net for more than 300,000 West Virginians.

Since 1965, the federal government has helped states to pay for health care for low-income Americans who do not have a way to afford medical treatments. In West Virginia, the health care infrastructure is comprised of hospitals, nursing homes, home health agencies, physicians, and community health centers. These providers are the backbone of the health care safety net, and they rely heavily on federal Medicaid funding to care for the poor, disabled, and elderly.

President Bush has already pushed forward a plan that would turn the Medicaid program into a block grant and arbitrarily cap the health care funding available for Medicaid recipients. That's a plan that would jeopardize medical services for the most medically vulnerable West Virginians, including low-income children, parents, pregnant women, people with disabilities, and senior citizens.

If the President's Medicaid plan becomes law, states would be left to shoulder the burden of

increasing health care costs on their own. A downturn in the economy that causes more people to become uninsured, public health threats or natural disasters, advances in costly medical technology or treatments, and the increasing costs of prescription drugs -- all these could drive a state's costs to levels higher than anticipated. And the health care needs of low-income people do not magically disappear just because there are fewer federal funds available.

As health care costs continue to grow over time, a limit on federal funds would force governors and state legislators to pit the needs of different populations against one another. States would be forced to implement even deeper cuts than those in recent years by further restricting eligibility, eliminating or reducing critical health benefits, and severely cutting or freezing reimbursement rates for health care providers. Consequently, many vulnerable people would lose access to health insurance and quality health care services.

I welcome an honest debate about ways to strengthen and improve the Medicaid program. As states are so often the incubators of policy innovations, I also recognize the need to increase state flexibility in the Medicaid program. But I am not willing to go along with President Bush's plan that cuts giant holes in the health care safety net for our nation's most vulnerable citizens.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Tragedy of Incredible Magnitude

On December 26, an earthquake with a magnitude of 9.0 on the Richter Scale occurred off the west coast of Northern Sumatra, Indonesia. That quake triggered a series of tsunamis that affected several countries throughout South and Southeast Asia, as well as Somalia, Tanzania, and Kenya in East Africa. But that scientific explanation does not begin to describe the devastation left in the wake of the calamity.

Lives by the tens of thousands destroyed. Families broken. Houses flattened. Communities washed away. There are few words to describe the destruction. It is a tragedy that is almost beyond comprehension.

At such times, one must wonder why it takes such tragedies to bring out the best of the human spirit. Yet, many of us only come to grips with our common bond of humanity in the face of truly enormous disaster.

The stark reminder of such horrific events is that man is really not in control of this world. God rules this world, and perhaps He sends us such devastation from time to time so that the goodness of human kindness and true empathy toward our fellow man. I do not know, but I do know that the prayers of many West Virginians are with the devastated families, the missing, and the dead at

this time.

Recovery will not be simple or quick. It will be a monumental task, one that I am encouraged to see the entire world joining to undertake. The United States is a strong partner in this work. The federal government has already pledged \$350 million to the effort, but our commitment to this effort does not stop there.

Americans from all walks of life have opened their hearts and their pocketbooks to the victims of the tsunami disaster. I commend President Bush for designating his father, President George H. W. Bush, and President Bill Clinton to lead the effort in raising private contributions. Those donations are pouring into relief agencies, and many people with expertise in medicine and other critical needs are putting their lives on hold to travel to these regions to help.

West Virginians wishing to make a contribution to the relief effort can help in several ways. Visit my Internet site, <http://byrd.senate.gov>, to learn more.

There may be many miles between our country and the victims of the tsunami, but we share the common bond of humanity. America will continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with those recovering from this disaster.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Keeping Coal's Future Bright

The United States needs a comprehensive energy plan, but, because of a policy stalemate in Washington, D.C., no such plan exists. I have tried to break that logjam, putting forward proposals to boost America's energy independence. Recently, my efforts were incorporated into a top-notch energy plan written by a bipartisan group of experts from industry, government, labor, academia, and environmental and consumer groups.

For two years, this group -- the National Commission on Energy Policy -- has worked on a strategy that places coal at the front and center of America's energy future while also cutting back on the nation's heavy reliance on oil and fuel imports. The need for such a strategy could not be more important. Breaking that foreign oil dependence is crucial.

By cutting America's reliance on foreign oil, we reduce the need for an American military presence in the Middle East. By shrinking the U.S. military presence in the Middle East, we address the concerns of those who are opposed to American forces near Islamic holy sites and take away a major reason for terrorist attacks. That is why this issue is so central to the country's future. America's energy policy is closely linked to America's national security.

The new report includes detailed recommendations for oil security, climate change, natural gas supply, the future of nuclear energy, and other energy and environmental challenges. Importantly for West Virginia, many of the Commission's recommendations can breathe new life into coal. The Commission recognizes that coal can be at the center stage of our efforts to secure our energy future.

The just-unveiled strategy recommends speeding the installation and use of technologies that will use coal more efficiently and more cleanly. These technologies can result in coal's being used in a host of applications -- from power generation to chemicals and liquid fuels -- while also significantly reducing the emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, mercury, and carbon dioxide.

I believe that energy and environmental goals are two sides of the same coin, and the National Commission on Energy Policy recognizes that truth. Using this new report as a starting point, it is time for Congress and the Bush Administration to work with industry, labor, academic, environmental, and community interests to find common ground. By doing so, we can champion a new energy and environmental legacy that will move the nation forward into a brighter, more energy independent 21st century.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Time for New Beginnings

On January 17, 2005, I had the honor of sitting with Governor and Mrs. Joe Manchin as he delivered his inaugural address from the steps of the State Capitol in Charleston. Our new Governor talked about his hope for the future -- a hope that he wants to turn into progress. During his campaign to be our state's chief executive, Joe Manchin brought unity and energy everywhere he traveled, and I hope that we will continue to see these forces at work in his administration.

As Governor Manchin begins his first term, President Bush is embarking on his second. The start of a new term in office, even for those who have held that office already, offers the chance for a fresh start. Inauguration Day is not just for the man or woman who places a hand on the Bible and swears to "preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution." Rather, it is a day when the entire country can come together to celebrate our Republic and the opportunities that are before us.

Many challenges face the country as President Bush begins his second term, but the opportunities are just as plentiful. We need to make quality health care more accessible and affordable. We need to protect Social Security so

that this safety net is available when Americans need it the most. We must put more Americans to work and ensure that they are paid a decent wage. And we should direct America's energy policy in a responsible and balanced way.

Along with a focus on these and other issues which impact our daily lives, we also must re-evaluate America's policies beyond our borders. The resistance in Iraq continues unabated. Scores of thousands of brave servicemen and women are hourly risking their lives to fulfill a murky mission with a seemingly untenable goal. The United States needs to reexamine its approach to Iraq and the Middle East because the approach is not working.

It will take a renewed commitment to bipartisan cooperation to address these and many other issues on which Congress will deliberate in the days ahead. The political rancor which has plagued the legislative process in recent years can be put to rest. I hope that this year's inaugural ceremonies will mark a moment in history when partisan divides begin to take a back seat to working together in the best interests of the people of West Virginia and the nation.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting Social Security for the Next Generation

Many West Virginians have listened with concern in past weeks to dire claims about Social Security and its ability to continue to pay benefits. It is important for the 405,000 West Virginians who receive a monthly Social Security check to know that no imminent crisis exists. Rest assured, your Social Security check will continue to arrive in the mail.

However, the current worker-to-retiree demographics in the United States spell trouble for Social Security and its ability to keep up with its promised benefits for future generations. People are having smaller families resulting in fewer new workers paying taxes into Social Security. And seniors are living longer and collecting benefits for many more years. In fact, in a little more than a decade, in 2018, the Social Security Trustees anticipate that the revenues collected from Social Security taxes will no longer be enough to pay full benefits to everyone eligible.

Members of Congress must reach across party lines to consider how to best ensure that Social Security, which has well served three generations of West Virginians, remains robust for future generations. We should beware hasty decisions that may actually undermine the

Social Security system that so many West Virginians know and trust.

The volatility of the financial markets suggests caution in how we approach changes to the Social Security program, in particular, the use of individual accounts. Simply allowing workers to invest Social Security funds in the stock market may sound appealing to some, but the start-up costs of these new accounts and our skyrocketing budget deficits could actually sap revenues needed to pay current retirees.

West Virginians should insist on knowing the complete, unvarnished details of any proposal that would affect their Social Security benefits. That is why I have written to President Bush to urge him to explain the full cost of his Social Security plan and its possible effect on workers' benefits. Every employer, laborer, office worker, student, spouse, and child, who pays into Social Security or expects one day to receive benefits from it, deserves to know the fine print of the President's plan.

For many West Virginians, Social Security is their sole source of income. It is incumbent upon all of us to fully understand the details of any suggested reforms to ensure that West Virginians' best interests are protected.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Building the Tools for a Modern Military

Tucked away in Mineral County is West Virginia's largest defense manufacturing facility, the U.S. Navy's Allegheny Ballistics Laboratory (ABL). Started in 1941 to build ammunition for American soldiers fighting in World War Two, ABL has undergone a transformation in recent years to take its place as a high-tech hub for new defense-related technologies.

I have been proud to be part of that transformation. Using my position as the senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I have worked with the U.S. Navy to invest tens of millions of dollars to demolish the old World War Two-era buildings and replace them with top-of-the-line manufacturing technologies and facilities.

The results have been astounding. Today at ABL, 60 years after it was founded, nearly 1,200 men and women are on site designing the latest generation of warheads, rocket motors, and other vital military components for the Department of Defense. ABL now operates in four areas of excellence to support the U.S. military -- tactical propulsion, precision ordinance, missile defense, and composite structures -- all of which contribute to the superiority

of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Recently, the largest company at ABL, Alliant Techsystems, announced that it would add another 180 jobs to the Mineral County facility. Beginning later this year, this new division will manufacture fuses and sensors for artillery, and both guided and unguided bombs.

ATK's decision to anchor this production operation at ABL is a credit to the facility's improvements and the quality work of its employees. These new jobs will provide a significant economic boost to Mineral County and will help to protect America's military forces around the world.

There is no doubt as to the strength of America's military might. A major part of that high standard is the ability of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines to rely on cutting-edge weapons and resources. West Virginia is helping to design the next generation of advanced, innovative defense weaponry. I take great pride in West Virginia's thriving defense initiatives and will continue to work to provide the men and women of our country's Armed Forces with the technology, the equipment, and the training that they need to successfully defend our nation.

February 2, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Meeting Our Constitutional Responsibilities

At the start of each term, Senators swear to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States...." It is a sacred oath, one before God and man, that I take with the deepest conviction.

The Constitution mandates that Senators provide "advice and consent" for presidential nominees, including Cabinet officers. I support the majority of President Bush's nominees. But I have opposed two people responsible for scars on the reputation and integrity of the United States.

When asked to confirm Condoleezza Rice as Secretary of State, I voted no. I do not question her credentials, but I oppose many of the decisions that Dr. Rice made during her four years as National Security Advisor. There remain too many unanswered questions about Dr. Rice's failure to protect our country before the attacks of September 11, her public efforts to politicize intelligence leading to war with Iraq, and her allegiance to the unconstitutional Bush doctrine of first-strike war. I cannot endorse promotion of a person who helped to set us on the path of a war that has led to the deaths of more than 1,440 American military men and women, and changed the image of this nation from that of a peacemaker to that of a bully.

When asked to confirm Alberto Gonzales as Attorney General, I again voted no. Mr. Gonzales, as chief legal counsel to President

Bush, provided his interpretation of law and policy directly to the President. When asked whether the United States should use torture as a means of interrogation, Mr. Gonzales gave the green light. Opinions on torture, which Mr. Gonzales either wrote, requested, authorized, endorsed, or had implemented, contributed to the graphic pictures and accounts of prisoner abuse in Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay, and Iraq, including at the Abu Ghraib prison.

The Constitutional "advice and consent" responsibility is not a rubberstamp endorsement of a nominee's educational achievement or level of expertise. Senators are expected to use their best judgment in considering nominations. The people deserve nothing less.

In my judgment, these two nominees' records did not merit giving them higher responsibilities in government.

At his Inauguration, President Bush spoke about America's historic support of freedom. But truly supporting freedom means upholding human rights, not seeking rationalizations to circumvent them. Moral standards long have defined America. But official policies of torture and abuse, and misleading a nation about the reasons for war, undermine our moral authority. Rewarding the architects of such policies makes a travesty of accountability. The Constitution's Framers would not have approved, and neither did I.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Bush Budget Doesn't Make the Grade

President Bush recently sent to Congress his budget for the coming year. His plan proposes to cut and, in many cases, eliminate funding for key education initiatives in the Mountain State. When it comes to helping West Virginia students achieve, the President gets an "F."

Schools across the country are struggling to meet tougher federal guidelines with already limited resources; yet, the Bush Administration has proposed the first cut to the education budget in a decade.

Nearly a third of all the programs targeted for elimination in the budget are education initiatives. On the President's chopping block are the very initiatives which make a contribution to the lives of students who most need assistance. West Virginia would see an \$8.4 million cut in vocational education, a \$3.8 million cut in education technology, a \$3.1 million cut in safe and drug-free schools programs, and a \$1.6 million cut in family literacy initiatives.

The Bush budget will also mean another year of broken promises when it comes to funding for the No Child Left Behind Act. About half of West Virginia's public schools receive Title I funding -- dollars geared specifically for children

from poor school districts. The Bush Administration promised West Virginia's Title I schools \$182 million for the coming year, but included only \$107 million in the budget, denying critical Title I services to 23,475 Mountain State students. The White House also pledged \$17.6 million for West Virginia after-school programs, but included only \$7.7 million in the budget, denying after-school services to 13,339 students.

Simply, No Child Left Behind made a promise. In exchange for higher standards and greater accountability, President Bush promised significant new resources to America's public schools. But, year after year, the Bush White House has failed to fulfill its promise. Accountability cannot just be a standard for teachers and students; it must also be a standard for the Administration.

The people of West Virginia gave President Bush their votes, and helped him win reelection, but what has he done to say thank you? He crafts a budget that shortchanges the education of our children and damages their future. Whether one uses 'new math' or 'old math,' cutting programs that help young West Virginians adds up to a loss for the Mountain State.

February 16, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

“Phishing” for Your Identity

Each day, more and more West Virginians surf the Internet, but there is a downside to this seemingly harmless activity. Common-place online transactions often reveal bits of personal information, including bank and credit card account numbers, Social Security numbers, or one's name, address, and telephone number. Unfortunately, devious individuals seek to obtain this sensitive information and use it, without the victim's knowledge, to commit fraud or theft.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) reports that people whose identities have been stolen can spend months or even years -- and also considerable amounts of their hard-earned money -- cleaning up the mess that the thieves make of good names and credit records. Some victims have lost job opportunities, been denied loans, or even been arrested for crimes that they did not commit.

When it comes to sharing personal information, one should exercise caution and prudence. A safe approach is to avoid giving out personal information on the telephone, through the mail, or over the Internet.

A computer can be a goldmine to an identity thief. To help safeguard electronic information, one should regularly update computer virus protection software, not download files from strangers or click on hyperlinks from strangers,

and use a firewall to limit uninvited access. The FTC recommends that Internet users ignore and delete all unsolicited e-mail communications, commonly referred to as “spam” or “junk e-mails.”

“Phishing,” a new form of spam, is a practice where a criminal sends out millions of e-mail messages that look like they are from legitimate companies, such as banks or charities. These messages provide links to authentic looking websites and ask victims to solve a purported problem with his or her account. Unfortunately, such sites can be fake, and the information that victims provide can be used to purchase goods or steal identities.

All who suspect that they may be victims of identify theft should review their credit reports and, if necessary, place a fraud alert on them. They should close any accounts that have been tampered with or accessed without permission. Finally, they should file reports with local police and contact the FTC.

To file a complaint or to learn more about the FTC's Privacy Policy, visit www.consumer.gov/idtheft; call the FTC's Identity Theft Hotline toll-free at 877-434-4338 or 202-326-2502 (TDD); or write the Identity Theft Clearinghouse, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20580.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Veterans Care Not Part of Bush Priorities

West Virginians are extremely proud of our veterans. Those men and women who have chosen to offer their lives in service to our nation are owed an enormous debt. The United States carries a moral responsibility, as President Lincoln said, "to care for him who shall have bourned the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan."

But the Bush budget undermines the country's commitments to America's veterans.

In his new budget proposal, the President includes a plan to double the copayment for monthly prescriptions and imposes a \$250 "user fee" for veterans whom the Administration reclassifies in "lower-priority categories." The Bush Administration made the decision to start turning away hundreds of thousands of these "lower-priority" veterans from service at U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals in January of 2003. According to the Congressional Research Service, this decision will mean that, by the end of this year, a staggering 522,000 veterans will be turned away from VA hospitals. Now the White House wants to go further and pile on more fees, copayments, and charges for veterans who have so far avoided

the Administration's budget axe.

The more than 190,000 veterans in West Virginia who receive their health care from the VA Medical Centers in the Mountain State are threatened by these significant hikes in fees and copayments. Combat veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars add to the stress on our VA facilities. Yet, instead of strengthening the VA medical system, the Bush Administration short-changes it.

Already, the nation's three largest veterans organizations -- the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Disabled American Veterans -- have called the President's budget "the most tight-fisted, miserly budget for veterans programs." They are right!

Veterans paid for their health care at Iwo Jima, at the Mekong Delta, at the Chosin Reservoir, at Fallujah, and at so many other locales. They should not be expected to pay yet again. But, make no mistake, if the choice is between budget-busting tax cuts or funding veterans health care programs, the Bush Administration seems always ready to choose to take care of America's elites instead of taking care of America's heroes.

March 2, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Health Insurance Options for Small Businesses

At a time when health care costs are skyrocketing, the number of individuals with medical insurance is dwindling. The harsh reality is that 45 million Americans have no health care coverage, including 275,000 West Virginians. For these people, health conditions go undiagnosed, illnesses go untreated, and critical medicines are not made available. These individuals go through life hoping and praying that they do not get sick or face a catastrophic medical problem.

Nowhere are the shortfalls in the health care system more apparent than in America's small businesses. In fact, those working in small businesses represent more than 60 percent of the country's uninsured. The cost of providing employee health benefits is rising for all employers, but small business owners are bearing an even greater burden. They are forced to pay more for policies that offer less. Exorbitant health care costs also serve as a barrier to job creation, forcing many small businesses to rely on part-time or temporary employees or limp along without needed help.

That is why I have introduced legislation that would open the door to health insurance for more small businesses and give more West Virginians access to affordable, good quality medical coverage. My bill would allow small businesses to band together

through a trade association to purchase health insurance. These partnerships would allow for the establishment of association health plans (AHPs). By joining together, small businesses would enjoy greater bargaining power, less financial risk, and lower administrative costs.

The legislation would ensure that more workers can afford health care benefits, regardless of whether they work for a large international company or a small hardware store. A worker at a local pizza place in West Virginia should have the same access to health benefits as someone who works for a large Fortune 500 company. But, instead, the "mom and pop" shops that support communities across the country have increasingly become the face of the uninsured.

This legislation is only one step that can be taken to make health care coverage available to more Americans. But AHPs would help to move toward a goal we all share, namely, to have as few uninsured Americans as possible.

Health care is not a matter of partisan politics. Rather, it is a basic quality of life issue. We must work to reverse the trend of rising numbers of uninsured Americans. Helping small employers to provide health benefits for their workers and their families is a smart first step.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Firefighters Need Help

The local fire department is a critical part of every West Virginia community. These men and women are always ready to assist their neighbors. A burning home, a passenger trapped in a car after an accident, and, yes, even the proverbial cat caught in a tree -- our firefighters are ready to respond to virtually any call for help.

The tragedies of September 11, 2001, reinforced in the minds of all of us the bravery of our firefighters. They place their lives in jeopardy in order to protect the lives and property of their neighbors. In West Virginia, many fire departments are staffed by volunteers, people who have full-time jobs elsewhere but are always prepared to set those jobs aside when the fire alarm rings. These men and women who put themselves in harm's way to protect their communities deserve the best equipment and training available.

That's why, in 2000, the Congress created the FIRE Act grant initiative. Fire departments throughout West Virginia and across the country have benefitted from this grant program. It has helped local departments to replace aging equipment and upgrade facilities. The grants have paid for training that helps to save the lives of firefighters and the people they protect. Last year, West Virginia fire departments received 108 FIRE Act grant awards, totaling nearly \$9 million.

Unfortunately, President Bush's budget for the upcoming year would force firefighters to carry out their critical duties with far fewer resources. The President has asked Congress to cut \$215 million from this grant program. This is a short-sighted proposal that jeopardizes the lives and well-being of people around the country, especially in rural communities.

Recently, I met with Carl Eastham, a firefighter from Huntington, who was in Washington, D.C., for meetings with his colleagues from across the country. Mr. Eastham rightly pointed out that police and fire departments already are, too often, understaffed, under-trained, and ill-equipped. Drastic cuts in funding, such as those proposed by the President, only serve to further jeopardize community safety.

Fortunately, funding for local fire departments is an issue that has broad support among Democrats and Republicans in Congress. It will take a strong show of support from members on both sides of the aisle to turn aside the President's misguided funding plan and invest in emergency preparedness and first responders in communities large and small. The equipment, technology, and training that the FIRE Act grants help to provide are key to protecting West Virginia's firefighters, our homes, and our families.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Remembering the Fabric of America

So often today, in the rush of our daily lives, we lose sight of what makes America unique. We get caught up in day-to-day pressures and fail to reflect on those freedoms which serve as the foundation for our Republic.

For instance, many people know the top movie at the box office or the winner of the World Series, yet far fewer know the names of the Founding Fathers or which freedoms are spelled out in the Constitution. Young people, in particular, are growing up without a real understanding and appreciation for the people and events which make up the fabric of our country.

According to a recent Harris survey, nearly two out of three Americans do not know all of the words to the Star-Spangled Banner, our country's national anthem. Even fewer know that the song's initial verses were written by the lawyer and poet Francis Scott Key in 1814 after seeing the American flag still flying after United States forces withstood the British attack on Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland.

Most young people learn the words of the national anthem and other patriotic songs in school music classes. Unfortunately, music courses too often are cut when schools

face tighter budgets. That's why a new initiative -- the National Anthem Project -- is so important. Through this initiative, the National Association of Music Education hopes to re-teach Americans the words to the Star-Spangled Banner.

The project's musical ambassadors, The Oak Ridge Boys, visited me recently to talk about this effort. We discussed the importance of teaching young people about the country's historical roots from the story of Nathan Hale to the precious liberties bestowed by the Constitution. The musicians and I agree that if America's youth are to be prepared to lead in the future, they first must develop a deeper understanding of the nation's past.

I hope that more people will take the time to read and to learn about our nation's past. Without a knowledge of the sacrifices that our forebearers made where we came from and how this great country began, we cannot fully understand the value of the freedoms that we enjoy today.

Our young people need to know that the Star-Spangled Banner is not just a warm up act to a football game. Rather, it is a celebration of our history here in the "land of the free and the home of the brave."



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Defending Free Speech in the Senate

Debate in the Senate soon will turn to the "nuclear option." This is no terrorist plot or military action aimed at a foreign country. The nuclear option is a weapon aimed at the heart of the United States Senate, namely, the right to free speech.

The nuclear option is a procedural maneuver that threatens to eliminate the right to unlimited debate in the Senate, the world's premier deliberative body. The Senate has confirmed a record number of President Bush's judicial nominees -- 204 men and women. Seven nominees did not win Senate approval. Yet, these same seven have been renominated by the President and, to force a vote on them, some Senators plan to eliminate the filibuster of judicial appointments for all time in the Senate.

Ending the filibuster would eliminate the last line of liberty. Free and open debate in the Senate ensures that citizens have a say in their government. The American people are heard, through their Senators, before their money is spent, before their civil liberties are curtailed, or before a judicial nominee is confirmed for a lifetime appointment. Eliminating the filibuster would silence the people's voices.

It would start by shut-

ting off debate about judges, but likely would not end there. The nuclear option could stop a Senator from speaking on issues important to gun owners, to farmers, to senior citizens, or to working families. Once the nuclear option is launched, there is no stopping it.

This is not a matter of partisan politics. I would oppose the nuclear option just as strongly if it were proposed by a Democratic president. Why? Because the nuclear option targets the very freedom to speak out in the protection of the people's liberties. The Constitution's Framers intended the Senate to be the last line of defense against tyranny. They meant for Senators to speak out against any would-be dictator or power grab by an overreaching Executive Branch. This requires that Senators have the right to speak, perhaps without limit, and draw attention to new or differing viewpoints.

Yes, Americans believe in majority rule, but we also believe in minority rights. We recognize that the majority is not always correct. This is a nation built by God-fearing people who want to preserve liberty. Whether one agrees or disagrees, the people's liberties can be truly secure only in a Senate where all views can be freely voiced and heard.

March 27, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Man of Faith

When Pope John Paul II died, the world lost an inspiring figure. The loss is one felt not only by people of the Catholic faith, but also by people of all religions. For 26 years, Pope John Paul II was shepherd of the Catholic Church's flock. For 26 years, he served the world as a voice for freedom and a champion of the poor.

Too often, religion is used to divide. Christians are pitted against Jews. Jews are shown opposing Muslims. Muslims are portrayed as hating Christians. Sometimes it is a division within broad faiths -- Catholics versus Baptists; fundamentalists versus moderates. Such divisions are perpetrated by stereotypes and by news media that thrive on conflict. But a significant contributor to the mistrust is a refusal by people of one faith to make an effort to understand and respect the faith of others.

Pope John Paul II bridged those divisions and focused on those beliefs that unite us. He sought to bind wounds that have scarred religious believers for centuries.

In 1986, the Pope prayed at a synagogue -- the first Catholic leader to do so. He embraced those of the Jewish faith as "our elder brothers" and bluntly condemned all forms of anti-Semitism.

In 2001, he again marked a first for the leader of the Catholic Church, praying at one of Islam's most celebrated mosques and also the site of the tomb of John the Baptist. There, the Pope urged Muslims and Christians to "turn to one another with feelings of brotherhood and friendship, so that the Almighty may bless us with the peace which heaven alone can give." It is a message so vital today.

In a world focused more on what divides us, the Pope taught us to reach for what unites us. There are common bonds among people from around the globe. That is a universal truth, whether one is Christian or Jewish or Muslim or any other faith. God has given us the tools as well as the opportunity to move to a better day. But it is up to us, God's servants, to move the world closer to Heaven.

Matthew in his Gospel writes, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Pope John Paul II helped to move mountains of poverty, of injustice, and of ignorance in all corners of the world. May his soul rest in peace.

April 6, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Saving Lives with Science

I never cease to be amazed by the medical advancements which have occurred during my lifetime. Each day, doctors and researchers make critical discoveries and develop new technologies that help people to enjoy longer and healthier lives. West Virginia University's Byrd Health Sciences Center is at the medical forefront, utilizing cutting-edge technology to provide top-notch patient care.

WVU's Mary Babb Randolph Cancer Center is home to an updated Positron Emission Tomography (PET)/computed tomography (CT) scanner which will allow physicians to make more accurate medical diagnoses and better determine the proper course of treatment. The non-invasive PET/CT scan provides a precise, three-dimensional picture of human organs in action. In this case, a picture is truly worth a thousand words, helping doctors to evaluate more fully a patient's condition and prognosis.

While the PET/CT scanner's imaging technology can be used to diagnose a variety of medical conditions, it is particularly useful for cancer patients. It can more accurately determine whether a tumor is malignant or benign, and reveal a spread of the primary cancer to other parts of the body. The procedure is

also a critical weapon in the battle against heart disease and neurological disorders. The health of thousands of West Virginians will benefit from WVU's newest health care service.

PET research and treatment at WVU began in the early 1990s when I secured \$10 million in federal funding to build and equip the Cancer Center for this lifesaving technology. At that time, PET was an experimental imaging technology, but, thanks to research efforts at WVU and elsewhere, it has become an important tool in contemporary medicine.

I have secured additional funding in recent years to create a center for PET education as part of the new health sciences library under construction at WVU. The facility will serve as a national clearinghouse for information on PET technology and will help more health care facilities across the country to learn about and provide this critical service.

For too long, West Virginians have had to travel far and wide for their medical services. Fortunately, times are changing. WVU medical professionals are leading the way to better treatments close to home for diseases that impact so many of our loved ones. By using the science of the future, we are saving lives today!



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Power of Poetry

The poet T.S. Eliot considered April the "cruellest month." To me, April is one of our grandest months. April is the month when the Earth springs back to life as green buds reappear on stark gray branches, pink, purple, and yellow blossoms reemerge from the soil, and lawns are blanketed in a soft verdant cover. April marks the return of Daylight Savings Time, and the return of our national past time, baseball. And, April is National Poetry Month, a national celebration of poetry.

The Academy of American Poets was founded in 1934 to support poets and to foster the appreciation of poetry. The Academy helps in the formation of poetry book clubs, distributes posters featuring American poets to teachers, librarians, and booksellers across the country, and sponsors events to celebrate the place of poetry in America. In 1996, the Academy inaugurated National Poetry Month, an entire month devoted "to promoting, publicizing, and celebrating poetry."

National Poetry Month is intended to encourage more people to pay greater attention to poetry, and to bring together publishers, booksellers, literary organizations, libraries, schools, and poets nationwide to celebrate the power of language. The Academy, throughout the month of April, highlights the legacy

and achievements of American poets and attempts to introduce more Americans to the pleasures of reading poetry.

This year, the Academy provided a list of 30 ways, one for each day of the month, in which to celebrate poetry. Its suggestions include spending the day reading a book of poetry, memorizing a poem, reading a poem to family or friends, and signing up for a poetry class or workshop. All of these suggestions are wonderful ideas.

I have long loved poetry -- the rhyming words, the rhythm of the stanzas, and the soulful imagery that good poetry imparts to the heart and mind. Poetry expresses humanity, and, through meter, makes music of the spoken word as it rhythmically sways and floats through our imaginations. Poetry, simply put, is beauty defined.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the celebration of National Poetry Month, I hope that more people will recognize the efforts of the Academy of American Poets and, more importantly, take the time to read a poem or two.

In her poem, "Spring," Edna St. Vincent Millay asked, "To what purpose, April, do you return again?" Now, thanks to the Academy of American Poets, we can answer, to showcase the power of poetry in our society.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Securing America's Borders

It is hard to believe that more than three and a half years have passed since September 11, 2001. An attack which most people could barely fathom anywhere happened here, on American soil. Life goes on, as it must; yet, many of us continue to ask ourselves, could it happen again?

Great strides have been made in the effort to better secure our homeland but much work remains. Perhaps there is no greater vulnerability in our national defense than the security of the country's borders.

Congress has passed bill after bill pledging funding for more border patrol agents and immigration investigators. But promises do not make our borders secure. To date, many of these promises remain unfulfilled, and America's borders remain full of gaping holes. High-ranking Customs Department officers, Bush Administration officials, and the President himself have spoken about the continuing threat from al Qaeda and the need for more border patrol agents. Yet, the White House included virtually no funds in the recent budget to hire and train new border officers and immigration investigators.

It is time to face the music about this very real threat to the security of the nation's borders. That is why I have written legislation that would provide \$390 million to hire 650 new border patrol agents,

250 new immigration investigators, and 168 new immigration enforcement agents and deportation officers. My proposal also provides funds to train the new personnel and pays for 2,000 additional beds for detained illegal aliens. I am proud to report that the Senate recently approved my plan, moving it another step closer to becoming law.

Americans are concerned about the security gaps along our borders. That concern has reached such a fever pitch in some locations that private citizens are banding together to form watch groups along the borders and report suspicious border crossings to the Border Patrol. This is a clear expression of the frustration felt by citizens along border areas and throughout the country that the federal government is failing to address this critical national security threat.

The job of the country's border patrol officers is staggering and their resources meager -- a dangerous combination indeed. Remember that 15 of the 19 September 11th hijackers slipped into our country because of an overburdened, underfunded border security system. My legislation will strengthen our borders and help to curb the alarming rise in illegal immigration. We cannot eliminate all threats to America's security, but we can take steps now to address known weaknesses in our border defenses.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Unplug Government Propaganda

In each year since 1951, Congress has passed a law prohibiting the use of federal funds for government propaganda purposes in the United States. Yet, despite the law, we have read report after report outlining efforts to skirt -- if not flat violate -- that prohibition.

On more than one occasion, the government has provided tax dollars to well-known talk show hosts to promote its agenda. One was paid a hefty fee to promote the No Child Left Behind Act. Another talk show host was paid to promote the Administration's welfare and family policies.

In an effort to blur the line even more between independent media and government propaganda, some federal agencies have produced prepackaged stories designed to look like real news produced by free market news outlets. People see these "reporters" on the television, but they do not know that the "reporters" were actually public relations professionals working under a false name for the government.

According to the Government Accountability Office, these actions violate the 1951 law. That is why I wrote legislation to prevent any government agency

from using taxpayer dollars to produce or distribute prepackaged stories which do not clearly identify that the so-called news was created by a federal agency or funded with taxpayer dollars. My legislation was approved by the Senate by a 98-to-zero vote, and soon will be on the President's desk to be signed into law.

I have no argument with the government's explaining its ideas and positions to the American people. Educating the public about issues affecting their lives is essential. But no Administration should engage in a blatant manipulation of the news media. Keep the job of government focused on the people.

We trust the free press to provide us with independent sources of information. We do not need phony news stories produced by the Administration at the taxpayers' expense. The government must not engage in propaganda paid for by the American taxpayer and targeted toward the American people. Government manipulation of the free press has no place in our Republic. In a free society, the people must know that reporters are presenting facts honestly, fairly, and without deception.

May 4, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

WV Guard ChalleNGes Young People

It is well known the contribution the National Guard makes to the excellence of the United States Armed Forces and the safety of communities across the country. The brave members of the National Guard serve on the frontlines of military operations around the world, and they always answer the call when emergencies and natural disasters strike at home. What is less known is the positive role the National Guard plays in the lives of America's at-risk youth.

I began the National Guard Youth Challenge Program in 1993 to help young men and women who have dropped out or been expelled from high school. The voluntary, 17-month program helps these students to earn their GED, enroll in college, or start a civilian or military career. Through the program's unique training and instruction, the students gain self-respect, tools for good citizenship, and other important life-coping skills.

The Youth Challenge Program currently operates in 24 states including the Mountaineer Challenge Academy at Camp Dawson, one of the program's original sites. Mountaineer Challenge has graduated 1,226 cadets, the vast majority of whom have joined the military, entered the job market, or gone back to school to continue their educations.

The Preston County academy was recently awarded the Challenge Program's "Excellence in Community Service Award" for providing students with opportunities to experience the value of giving back to the community. Mountain Challenge's community service efforts have included conservation projects and work at a local nursing home, library, and animal shelter.

Shortfalls in state budgets across the country have put the Youth Challenge program in jeopardy. That's why I have authored legislation to ensure that Youth Challenge will continue to mentor at-risk young people who want to change the direction of their lives. My legislation increases the federal cost-share of the program over the next three years and increases the program's funding by \$15 million for next year -- the first significant increase in per-student funding in the history of the program.

The Challenge program is extremely important to the youth of West Virginia and the entire nation. It takes at-risk students off the path of trouble and helps them to become responsible adults who will contribute to their communities. I hope current and future Challenge students will continue to thrive in the program and, by doing so, redeem their futures.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Standing by the WV Guard

For many years, the men and the women of the West Virginia National Guard have made us proud. They have flown across the globe to support America's Armed Forces. They've served bravely in Iraq and Afghanistan, in Bosnia and Kosovo, and in Panama. They have saved lives at home, too, battling floods and blizzards and storms in Clendenin, Philippi, Parkersburg, Petersburg, Wheeling, and so many more communities.

Now, the Department of Defense has recommended that the Charleston-based 130th Airlift Wing, with its more than 1,000 jobs, be stripped of its fleet of C-130 aircraft. Where there are no planes, there is no mission. Take away the planes, and you end the life of the 130th Airlift Wing. That's no thanks for a job well done.

Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld included the 130th Airlift Wing on a closure list that he submitted to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission. The commission can vote to remove from or add any base to the list and then forward a final list to President Bush for him to accept or reject.

Protecting the 130th and getting it off of the closure and realignment list will be a tough job. But the National Guard has

never run from a challenge, and neither will we. The West Virginia Congressional Delegation is united in the effort to protect the West Virginia National Guard. I personally spoke with the President and carried the concerns of the West Virginia Delegation to him at the White House, in hopes that the Administration would keep the 130th off the closure list completely. Our appeals fell on deaf ears. But our efforts are not over. We will continue to work with state and community leaders to protect the 130th and its mission. The fight has just begun.

Secretary Rumsfeld's plan to eliminate the West Virginia National Guard's 130th Airlift Wing's entire fleet of aircraft is a slap at these men and women who play such a vital role in National Security. They deserve better. The Guard lives its motto, "Always Ready, Always There," yet the Pentagon said thanks, but no thanks.

The men and women of the 130th are husbands and wives, moms and dads, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. They are our neighbors and friends. The face of the 130th is the face of West Virginia. We must rise up together and stand by our National Guard as they have stood by us.

May 18, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Clean Water in Our Homes

Modern technology can speed information across the world in a fraction of a second. People travel from one continent to another in a matter of hours. The advancements will only continue to amaze.

Unfortunately, there are still people in our country whose community infrastructure has barely entered the 20th century, let alone the 21st. One major problem is unsafe drinking water. Millions of Americans have drinking water which is filled with dangerous bacteria. It is an absolute travesty that some people in this country still turn on their kitchen faucets and get brown, cloudy liquid instead of pure, safe drinking water.

In fact, according to studies from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), more than 16 million Americans lack access to safe drinking water. In today's America, safe drinking water should be a reliable staple of everyday life.

That is why I have worked in the Senate to boost the federal investment in constructing water and sewer systems.

A project in Randolph County is the latest example. In 1997, community leaders put forward their plan for the Upper Tygart River Watershed Project to bring water service to thousands of area residents.

They had a good plan, but did not have the funding. That's why I went to work to get the funding through the federal appropriations process.

Using my position as the top Democratic Senator on the Appropriations Committee, I added more than \$21 million to appropriations bills to make this project a reality, including the final \$4 million in legislation just recently signed into law. Because of my partnership with local leaders, the Upper Tygart River Watershed Project soon will provide clean and safe drinking water to 16,000 people in Southern Randolph County.

While this is an important milestone, there remains much work ahead. The terrible truth is that, in our state and all across the country, the health of millions of men, women, and children is vulnerable because of their reliance on a contaminated water supply.

Hundreds of billions of dollars are needed to bring clean, safe drinking water to all Americans. The needs continue to grow and more and more of our people are at risk because the federal government refuses to face the problem. Clean water should not be some fancy luxury only afforded to those living in wealthy communities; clean water is basic to the health and prosperity of all citizens.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Hands-On Approach to Home Safety

Home dangers are often easy to miss, but for West Virginians, it is a problem that is too serious to ignore. In fact, in its "State of Home Safety in America" report, the Home Safety Council found that West Virginia reported the third highest fatality rates from falls in the home, and was ranked the fifth highest state for home-injury related fatalities overall. On a national scale, the same study showed home-related injuries result in nearly 21 million medical visits and 20,000 deaths each year with the three leading causes being falls, fires and burns, and poisonings.

Keeping loved ones safe at home requires a daily commitment and, together with the Home Safety Council, I encourage West Virginians to take action to create a safe home environment. As June is Home Safety Month, here are some easy ways to make our homes safer places in which to live throughout the year.

Install smoke alarms on every level of the home and test them monthly. Also, create a fire escape plan that shows two exits out of every room, where possible, and identifies a place where

families should meet outside the home.

All stairs and steps need handrails along both sides, secured along the full length of the stairway. Keep stairs and pathways clear of clutter. In homes with babies and toddlers, use baby gates at the top and bottom of stairs.

Install lighting at the top and bottom of stairs.

Display emergency numbers such as 911 and the National Poison Control Hotline number (1-800-222-1222) next to every phone in the home.

Install child locks on all cabinets used to store dangerous items.

Keep the water heater setting at 120 degrees Fahrenheit or less.

These are just a few recommendations. But there are many more steps that can be taken to make one's home safer. For more information and tools, visit the Home Safety Council (www.homesafetycouncil.org) or my Web site (<http://byrd.senate.gov>) and click on the Home Safety Council logo. By taking simple steps, West Virginians can help to reduce the number of home-related injuries in our state and keep our families safe.

June 1, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Celebrate West Virginia Day

June 20 is a special day for Mountaineers everywhere, as we commemorate the day when President Abraham Lincoln signed the bill which carved our state from the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is a day of great pride for our state and our people.

For me, West Virginia is more than a state of the Union; it is a state of mind. "Mountaineers are always free" is more than a state motto; it is a spirit that runs through young and old alike.

I have seen that spirit first hand. Growing up in the coalfields of Southern West Virginia, I watched as neighbor supported neighbor after a slate fall at the mine. I have stood with miners and steelworkers and so many others as they fought to put food on the table, to pay the doctors' bills, and to give their families good lives. I have helped as entrepreneurs take what once was just a vague idea and turn it into a new business and new opportunity. I have congratulated our young people as they receive their diplomas and embark on new adventures in their lives. I have marveled at the "joyful noise"

made unto the Lord in our churches, as religious voices rise up together.

Through all the years, in the face of so many challenges, at times of great success and in moments of deep anguish, we can all hold fast to our faith and to the spirit of West Virginia. In West Virginia, we work hard to leave our state and our country in better shape than when we found it. It may seem like a cliché to people who are new to our state, but, in West Virginia, that's just the way things are.

On this 142nd anniversary of West Virginia's statehood, it is a time to give thanks to the Creator for the beauty around us -- our majestic mountains and forests, our beautiful rivers, and our breathtaking landscape. It is also a time to rededicate ourselves to our state. Each West Virginian has a stake in the future. West Virginians, working together, can help to lift our state to a brighter day. With that strength, the days ahead will be filled, not just with the promise of hope but also with the satisfaction of success.

Happy birthday, West Virginia! And many happy returns, now and always.

June 8, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Making the Case for the National Guard

West Virginia is fortunate to have one of the best National Guard organizations in the United States. The men and women of the Guard understand the importance of their mission to our state's safety and to America's security, and West Virginians are rightly proud of them.

Despite their outstanding record of service, the Secretary of Defense has proposed cutting the heart out of our National Guard by stripping all of the aircraft from the Charleston-based 130th Airlift Wing. The 130th is the support backbone for the rest of the state's Guard units; the Secretary's plan, if approved, would ripple throughout all of the West Virginia National Guard.

Recently, I accompanied a team of analysts visiting the airbase along with several members of the West Virginia Congressional Delegation, Governor Joe Manchin, Charleston Mayor Danny Jones, and other area leaders. These analysts work for the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission, the commission charged by Congress with reviewing the Secretary's recommendations and deciding whether his proposals should go

forward.

Secretary Rumsfeld claims that the 130th can only park and operate eight C-130 aircraft at the Charleston base. In fact, the base can handle 12 aircraft right now and, with a few enhancements, could easily accommodate 16 aircraft -- the number described by the Air Force as the best size for a C-130 unit.

Making the case to the analysts is an important step. But it is just one step. I've asked BRAC Commission Chairman Anthony Principi to visit Charleston. He will travel to the West Virginia National Guard base in the coming days. At the end of the month, West Virginia will make its case to the BRAC Commission at a hearing in North Carolina. General Tackett, the Governor, and the West Virginia Congressional Delegation will stand together for the 130th Airlift Wing. They are doing a great job for all of us. We will do our best to pull together for all of them.

This is an uphill fight. The cards are stacked against us. But the men and women of the West Virginia National Guard have always stood by us, and we must continue to stand by them.

June 15, 2005



Senator Byrd and Governor Manchin are pictured with members of the West Virginia Air National Guard. Byrd is pushing to protect the backbone of the West Virginia Guard -- the 130th Airlift Wing based in Charleston. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld wants to strip all of the aircraft from that highly decorated unit.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Easing Gas Price Pain

Gas prices are once again on the rise. The price of the oil that the United States imports from OPEC nations and other parts of the world hit \$60 per barrel this week, a record high.

West Virginians know that gas prices are significantly higher today than in years past, and that relief has been slow in coming. The American Automobile Association -- better known as Triple A or "AAA" -- reports that drivers are paying prices 25 to 30 cents per gallon higher than last summer. That kind of increase is putting a real pinch on drivers, especially those in rural areas where there is limited access to the kind of mass transportation you might find in big cities.

People in West Virginia are reminded every day, as they drive to work and take their children to school, of the outrageous cost of gasoline. Rural families, in particular, are hit hard by spiking gas prices, and they often have little extra money to absorb the increase, forcing painful cuts in their family budgets. These families are forced to stretch their paychecks a little further each week, and have been left to wait and hope that gas prices will go down

sooner rather than later.

That's why I am pleased to report that the Senate has overwhelmingly approved my legislation that will begin to provide West Virginians with relief from high gas prices. My amendment, which is now part of a larger Senate energy bill, would create a tax benefit for rural drivers in West Virginia. It is a step toward what I hope will be more significant help for working families.

My amendment would allow employers in West Virginia to offer their eligible employees a monthly \$50 tax benefit to help offset costly gasoline purchases. This initial tax benefit, if it is approved by the House of Representatives, would be available through January 1, 2007.

High gas prices are frustrating drivers, and hampering the local economies of West Virginia. I recognize that, and the Senate's adoption of my amendment demonstrates that the Congress is beginning to respond to the fact that rural states like West Virginia are being hit hard by high gas prices. I hope that this amendment is a first step in relieving the pain that West Virginians are paying at the gas pump.

June 23, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Cornerstone of Quality Television

Too often today, television programming is geared toward sex and violence. Adult situations, crude language, and extreme violence pervade the airways. Parents look for ways to protect their children from these corrupting influences. These are not shows designed to educate or inform. They certainly aren't shows that help to inspire young people.

One of the few television networks that does not rely on sex and violence to drive its programming is the Public Broadcasting System -- PBS. Probably best known for its children's educational shows and characters like Big Bird and Mr. Rogers, PBS programming encourages healthy attitudes. PBS helps to open the imaginations of our children with wholesome, creative programs. It teaches our young people the importance of truthfulness, respect for others, and kindness for one's neighbor.

But PBS is more than "Sesame Street." It delivers news and information from around the world. West Virginia Public Broadcasting provides our state's residents with quality coverage of news from the Northern Panhandle to the Southern Coalfields, from the banks of the Ohio River to the banks of the Potomac. It teaches history and explores the world's wonders.

Yet, despite its many contributions to West Virginia and the country, an

effort led by the Leadership in the House of Representatives would start to dismantle public broadcasting. What makes public broadcasting 'public' is the fact that we the people contribute to its operations. Public broadcasting is publicly funded with tax dollars and private contributions. The Congress typically budgets for public broadcasting two years in advance. But this year, the House Leadership has proposed to slash \$100 million from public broadcasting for next year, and completely eliminate the funding the following year. If approved, West Virginia Public Broadcasting would face a cut of more than 46 percent in its overall funding. That kind of cut would be disastrous. The "vast wasteland" of TV programming would be left to continue its diet of sizzle and junk food for the mind.

West Virginia needs more public broadcasting, not less. Families need more programs that help to teach children to read, to listen to their parents, to be a part of their communities, and to live a good life.

I will fight on behalf of West Virginia parents to keep PBS going. We cannot afford to have this valuable public resource disappear. The cost to the Treasury to help support PBS is relatively small, but the benefit to our children and our values is enormous.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Taking Wing with the West Virginia Guard

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld a few weeks ago released his plan to strip the C-130 aircraft from the Charleston-based West Virginia National Guard 130th Airlift Wing. The Secretary's plan simply does not make sense -- not from a military perspective, not from a homeland security perspective, and certainly not from a West Virginia perspective.

Specifically, Secretary Rumsfeld would end almost all operations at our airbase, stripping the eight C-130 aircraft from Charleston. The independent, nonpartisan Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission is examining the details of the Secretary's plan, and has the power to stop it from taking effect.

This past week, the West Virginia Congressional Delegation, Governor Joe Manchin, Adjutant General Allen Tackett, and members and supporters of the West Virginia National Guard traveled to Charlotte, North Carolina, to make the case to the BRAC Commission for keeping our airbase open.

During the hearing before the BRAC Commission members, we praised the outstanding record of service that the 130th Airlift Wing has established. This unit has served with honor in Iraq and Afghanistan, in Rwanda, and in Kosovo. It has been at the tip of the spear in some of the most dangerous military missions in recent times and has al-

ways responded with skill and courage.

At the same time, the 130th Airlift Wing is the backbone of homeland security efforts not only in our state but also in 10 other states plus the nation's Capital. The 130th will speed specialized response teams to the scene in the event of a terrorist attack with a biological, chemical, or nuclear weapon. Without the 130th's pilots, crews, and planes at the ready, these highly trained homeland security teams would be left waiting on the runway for a ride to arrive.

In addition, the West Virginia National Guard always remembers its mission here at home. The 130th, like all of our Guard units, has responded to floods, blizzards, and hurricanes throughout our state. When Mother Nature sends us her worst, the West Virginia National Guard is on the job, saving lives and protecting property.

The BRAC Commission is weighing these facts and many others which were not included in Secretary Rumsfeld's closure plan. The commissioners have a tough job. But West Virginia has given them good reasons to keep the 130th flying.

It will not be easy to change the Pentagon plan. However, we won't give up the fight. I've said it before, but it bears repeating: Our National Guard has always stood with us; now we will stand with them.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting the Pension Safety Net

Pensions are as much a part of workers' earnings as a weekly paycheck. Employees earn the safety net that pensions provide, and they depend on those dollars when retirement comes around. But, too many people are seeing their pensions dissolve into thin air when companies hit hard times.

At a recent Senate Budget Committee hearing, I questioned the head of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation -- the federal pension insurer -- about companies that abusively use the bankruptcy code to avoid meeting their pension obligations. Businesses, rightly or wrongly, file for bankruptcy, and workers, through no fault of their own, find themselves stranded -- too young to collect Social Security and Medicare and too old to find a new job. As a result, too many workers are cheated of their hard-earned pension and health benefits.

It pains me to hear from workers who do not know how they will provide for their families, let alone themselves, when their companies terminate their pension plans. Coal miners, steel and aluminum workers, airline personnel, and countless others have been forced to live through this nightmare.

I have worked throughout my career to protect worker pensions. I supported the Employee Retirement

Income Security Act of 1974, which created the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, insuring workers' pensions, as well as numerous requirements to protect workers' retirement savings. It is also why I have been such a staunch defender of Social Security, and why I will oppose any changes that would undermine that safety net. As I listen to West Virginians, I am convinced that more needs to be done to protect their pension benefits.

President Bush has proposed new rules to help ensure that voluntary, employer-provided pensions are funded when workers retire. That's a laudable goal, but we must also be sure that companies are not forced into doing away with their pension plans altogether. Congress should take a closer look at corporate bankruptcy laws and work to make sure that unscrupulous executives cannot secure a golden parachute while their employees are left to fend for themselves.

Pensions are the reward for a lifetime of hard work. American workers are holding up their end of the bargain, but too many employers are not. Workers' financial security ought not be jeopardized by corporate bankruptcies. That is the challenge which the Congress faces when considering pension reforms this year.

July 13, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Living Up to the Constitution

Article II, section 2, of the Constitution states that a president "shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint . . . Judges of the supreme Court" and other federal courts.

The intent of these words recently has been the subject of serious debate. Many Senators believe that President Bush has a Constitutional obligation to seek the Senate's advice before selecting judicial nominees, while others apparently feel that the Senate's only role is to vote up or down on the President's choices.

Tensions grew and the Senate was on the brink of meltdown. A parliamentary maneuver was threatened by the Senate Republican Leadership -- a maneuver which would have ended filibusters of judicial nominees while also crippling a minority's freedom of speech and right to dissent. It was then that 14 Senators, including myself, reached a bipartisan agreement to allow confirmation votes on certain judicial nominees and to filibuster future nominees only in "extraordinary circumstances."

As part of the agreement, Republican Senator John Warner and I wrote a provision urging the President to seek the Senate's "Advice" on future nominations. By consulting Senators at the "take off," a president's judicial nominee is more likely to have a smoother journey toward confirmation.

When Justice Sandra Day O'Connor announced plans to retire from the Supreme Court, she launched events that have reinforced the Constitutional principle of "Advice and Consent."

The results are encouraging. Before selecting a nominee to fill the O'Connor vacancy, President Bush called me and some other Senators in both parties.

I shared with President Bush the qualities that I believe are essential in a Supreme Court Justice. I am delighted that President Bush heard the voices of our bipartisan group of 14 Senators. I commend him for his efforts to consult Senators and thus elicit their advice.

The bottom line is that our citizens need to have confidence in their federal courts. They need to know that nominees for the Supreme Court are selected on the basis of merit, not partisan politics.

Avoiding needless rancor and petty politics is a worthy goal when it comes to selecting candidates for lifetime service on the nation's federal courts.

I look forward to meeting the President's nominee, Judge John G. Roberts, learning more about him, and listening to his testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee. The confirmation of a Supreme Court Justice is a major decision which will affect an entire generation of Americans. We need to select our "best and brightest" for service on the Supreme Court.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Keeping Amtrak on Track

As sure as the train whistle blows when entering the station, it's also like clockwork that the White House puts Amtrak on the funding chopping block. Every year the Administration threatens to send the national passenger rail service into bankruptcy, and every year I fight to keep it afloat. In President Bush's most recent budget, he proposed the nearly complete elimination of Amtrak's funding. I joined other Amtrak advocates in the Senate -- Democrats and Republicans -- to reject the debilitating cut. We even found a way to boost Amtrak's funding.

Earlier this year, U.S. Department of Transportation officials testified before Congress that Amtrak needed at least \$1.4 billion to maintain current routes and services. Yet, the President requested that the Amtrak budget be zeroed out except for a small amount for commuter train service between Washington, D.C., and New York City.

As the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, I engineered a bipartisan effort to direct \$1.4 billion to Amtrak and reject the White House's plan to cripple the railroad. The funding not only restores the proposed cut but also adds \$200 million above Amtrak's operating subsidy last year. The victory will help to ensure that Amtrak has enough funding

to keep on track for the next year.

Amtrak is a critical transportation link for people in all corners of the country. Millions of people ride the rails daily to get to and from work, to visit family and friends many miles away, or to travel on vacation. National passenger rail service should be truly national. It should include big cities and small communities, like those along the "Cardinal" and "Capitol Limited" routes in West Virginia.

The elimination of Amtrak's subsidy is not a recipe for a streamlined railroad. It is not a recipe for a more efficient railroad. It is a recipe for a dead railroad. The Administration's shortsighted plan takes the "national" out of national passenger rail service and turns its back on rural communities where Amtrak is a primary transportation link to the rest of the country. With the high prices of gasoline and increasing competition for foreign oil, we must help Amtrak to improve its service and modernize its trains.

Studies report that passenger rail systems in the United States carry about five times as many passengers each day as airlines. Last year, Amtrak recorded its highest ridership levels in history. The American people depend on the railroad, and the White House should value it, too.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Veterans Medical Care Saved!

For the past several months, I have been warning of a looming shortfall in the funding for veterans medical care. Despite the concerns, the White House and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) acted as though no problem existed. But, recently, the truth caught up with the VA, and the Administration admitted that a massive financial shortfall threatened veterans' medical services.

Without action, our veterans' health care would have been placed at risk. America's veterans have given much for their country. We have a moral obligation to give back to them, and to provide for their health care needs.

Twice this summer, I guided through the Senate legislation containing \$1.5 billion to fill the growing deficit in VA health care funding. Each time, the Senate gave unanimous approval to my proposals. At first, the White House and the Republican Leadership in the House of Representatives said no, wanting to pare back the resources needed by West Virginia's 190,000 veterans and millions more across the country.

After much wrangling, I am proud to report that the \$1.5 billion that I sought for our veterans has passed the Congress and been signed into law.

The challenge now fac-

ing the Bush Administration is to put these dollars to work. Veterans cannot afford having the White House put this funding on a shelf. This money must be invested where it is so desperately needed, namely, in the health and well being of our country's veterans.

I have spent the last several weeks visiting the VA medical centers throughout West Virginia to personally thank our veterans for their service to our country. I want them to know that I will do all that I can to protect their health care. We owe them much.

We have veterans from two World Wars, Korea, Vietnam, the first Gulf War, and so many other battles already waiting in line to see a doctor. Now, we have new veterans coming home each day from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, some with grievous injuries. They should not come home to face long lines to see a doctor or, worse, to no doctor at all.

"Support the troops" means taking care of veterans after they come home. Our brave fighting men and women deserve quality health care. They should not be cut off from their doctors and nurses simply because the Bush Administration would rather save a few dollars. We must not fund veterans' health care on the cheap.

August 3, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Safer Roads, Better Jobs

The United States Congress has given its final approval to legislation that will invest more than \$2 billion in West Virginia's highways, roads, bridges, and specialized transit programs, like the PRT at West Virginia University. This \$2 billion investment during the next five years is a significant step forward.

Throughout our state, many road and highway construction projects have been slower to develop than local residents or I would like. A big part of that problem has been an unreliable and, frankly, insufficient stream of funding. That's why my work on this highway package was so critical.

The just-passed highway bill will invest an average of \$404 million in each of the next five years in projects from the Northern Panhandle to the Southern Coalfields, from the Eastern Panhandle to the banks of the Ohio River. I especially want to thank Senator Jay Rockefeller and Congressman Nick Rahall for their partnership in helping me to move these funds forward.

In 1947, when I began my public service in the West Virginia House of Delegates, there were only four miles of divided, four-lane highway in the entire state.

Four miles! In fact, there were so few miles that they were not recorded on the state roadmap that year.

When I was elected to Congress in 1952, I made it a goal to turn that situation around. Today, more than a half-century later, I am proud to report that West Virginia has made significant progress. Today, there are more than 1,000 miles of divided four-lane highways throughout the state. These miles are in every region of the state, from I-68 in North Central West Virginia to I-77 in our western counties. Corridor Highways crisscross West Virginia. Throughout the state, as miles long-planned are finally paved, jobs and businesses follow close behind.

I am proud of the \$2 billion that I helped to get for West Virginia in this new highway bill. These dollars bring construction jobs. The roads bring new investments and open doors to new businesses and improved services. And, equally as important, these funds help to protect lives and reduce the risk of traffic accidents. I have worked hard to win these dollars, and firmly believe that the funding in this bill will make a real difference in the lives of all West Virginians.

August 10, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Happy Birthday Social Security

As Americans this month mark the 70th Anniversary of the Social Security Act, many people remain concerned about the future of the program.

West Virginians know, better than most, the absolute necessity of Social Security. It oftentimes is the difference between living with dignity or living in poverty. One in four West Virginians -- more than 400,000 retirees, disabled workers, widows and widowers, spouses and children -- receives a monthly benefit check. The arrival of their benefit check is essential, and for 70 years it's been guaranteed regardless of hard economic times.

It is no exaggeration to suggest that the Social Security checks on which these West Virginians depend could be undermined by efforts to privatize the system. Social Security privatization would subject the livelihood of workers to the volatile movements of the financial markets. Some may do better than others with stock market gains, but many West Virginia families could lose a lifetime of their savings in a single day.

If Social Security is privatized, the arrival of a Social Security check for many families could no longer be guaranteed. When the market falls into a tail-spin, it is the privileged few at the top -- not the ordinary workers -- who would have the golden parachutes.

Social Security has always been a safety net for West Virginians, and not a roulette wheel for financial profit. It is an opportunity to share in a dignified and respectable living, and gambling with that opportunity is as unseemly as gambling with your weekly grocery money. Let us not be lured into trading away our safety net without adequate thought as to who the winners and losers would be under a privatized system.

Social Security is a gift from the World War II Generation to this and every generation. It was forged from their suffering and resiliency during the Great Depression, and the task now falls to us to preserve that gift for our children and grandchildren.

In 1935, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the law creating Social Security, he stated that the program would "give some measure of protection to the average citizen and to his family against the loss of a job and against poverty-ridden old age." That protection is just as necessary today, and we must not allow it to be weakened or taken away.

I will continue to fight in the Senate, as I have always fought, to protect workers, and to retain the integrity, stability, and dependability of their Social Security system. Our future generations deserve no less.

August 17, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Break the Grip of Foreign Oil

Gas prices are through the roof. Each week, the price at the pump climbs even higher, and there is no end in sight.

I have tried to offer some relief for people who drive back and forth to work in West Virginia and in rural communities across the country. I have pressed the Congress to approve my legislation which would create a new tax benefit for drivers who live in rural states, where public transportation is not readily available.

I'm proud to say that the Senate approved my proposal without opposition. But, behind closed doors, the Republican Leadership in the House and the White House pulled the plug on this attempt to provide a simple remedy to the American people for the ever-rising gas prices.

Make no mistake; these pressures are real. Families are rearranging priorities and cutting back on their household budgets so that they can afford to fill up their gas tanks each week. But the Congress hasn't lifted a finger to help.

For too many months, the Bush Administration has taken a "wait and see" approach when it comes to today's outrageous price of gasoline. Enough is enough. Washington ought to get its

priorities straight. Instead of focusing on what the big special interests want, the Congress ought to do all that it can to help working families.

The higher gas prices underline the fact that the United States is too dependent on foreign oil. Those foreign suppliers and the big oil companies are making record profits while working Americans see their family budgets continue to shrink.

Last month, I backed legislation that would begin to break these chains of foreign oil dependence. The new energy law will begin to make critical investments in West Virginia coal and in other resources that we have here in America -- resources that can power our cars and trucks and factories and homes. But this is just a start. While this new law opens the door to energy independence in the long run, it will take hard work and innovation to finally move away from our over-reliance on foreign oil.

I will continue to fight in the Senate for West Virginia coal and for our working families. I will once again press for my tax benefit for those who drive to work. And I will always work to free our nation from the binds of foreign oil.

August 24, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Big Win for the West Virginia Guard

Three and a half months ago, the West Virginia National Guard was placed in jeopardy, not by a foreign enemy but by our own Department of Defense. In May, the Pentagon unveiled a plan to cease all flying operations at the West Virginia National Guard's 130th Airlift Wing in Charleston. I said it then, and I'll say it now: The Defense Department's plan was wrong. Closing the 130th made no sense from a national security perspective, a homeland security perspective, or a West Virginia perspective.

When the plan came out, Governor Joe Manchin, the West Virginia Congressional Delegation, and hundreds of West Virginians joined to fight it. The Pentagon proposal needed the approval of the independent Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission. After talking with Adjutant General Allen Tackett, Charleston Mayor Danny Jones, and Kanawha County Commission President Kent Carper, I immediately contacted BRAC Commission Chairman Anthony Principi, urging him to visit the Charleston base and see for himself just how wrong the Defense Department was.

Chairman Principi agreed to visit, and I accompanied him to the airbase. After his inspection, Chairman Principi agreed that the Defense Department had its facts wrong.

The Defense Depart-

ment claimed that the 130th could only handle eight C-130 aircraft. The facts showed that the base can handle 12 aircraft right now and, with a few enhancements, could easily accommodate 16 aircraft.

The Defense Department also ignored the role that the 130th plays in homeland security. The facts show that the 130th Airlift Wing is the backbone of homeland security efforts not only in our state but also in 10 other states plus the nation's Capital.

These facts and many others convinced Chairman Principi. They also convinced the other eight members of the BRAC Commission. All nine commissioners voted to save the 130th Airlift Wing. The vote signals strong confidence in the future of the West Virginia National Guard.

The 130th has not wasted any time in answering the call to its mission. Within days after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf States, the 130th activated to help with relief and recovery efforts. I applaud them for their unceasing commitment to our state and our country.

The BRAC win is a great victory for the more than 1,000 members of the 130th Airlift Wing and for all of the state. I am immensely proud of our West Virginia National Guard. They have always stood by us, and I will always stand by them.

August 31, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Helping Victims of Hurricane Katrina

Hurricane Katrina dealt the people of America's Gulf States an unspeakable blow. Tens of thousands of homes have been destroyed. Entire cities have been washed away. And, most tragically, thousands of lives have been lost.

West Virginians know all too well the wrath of Mother Nature when flood waters flow. After a severe flood, the feeling of helplessness and hopelessness can be overwhelming. However, Mountaineers also have known the depth of human goodness when friends, neighbors, and caring people from far away lend a helping hand. We have been shown great kindness in our times of need, and we must do what we are able to help those impacted by the hurricane.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the lead coordinator of the relief effort, cash donations are most helpful at this early stage. Money contributions allow relief organizations to meet victims' immediate needs. Volunteer agencies use cash donations to provide a wide variety of post-disaster services including clean-up, childcare, housing repair, crisis counseling, sheltering, and food.

If you can, make a donation for the hurricane victims by calling the American Red Cross hotline at 1-800-

HELP NOW (435-7669). For a longer list of relief organizations that are accepting cash donations, visit my Internet site at <http://byrd.senate.gov>.

Giving money is not the only way to help. Simple prayers can help those people whose lives have been turned upside down by Hurricane Katrina. The power of prayer cannot be underestimated. The hurricane victims, their families, and the relief workers who are coming to their aid need our support and the Creator's strength.

As the people of the Gulf States start the long journey to put their lives back together, I want answers from FEMA as to why it took so long for rescue teams to get on the ground in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. There is no excuse for the days of delay and the inexplicable lack of coordination in the response effort. People's anger and frustration are justified. The government's actions in the days following the tragedy were slow and misguided at best, and completely inept at worst. The federal response effort is unacceptable, and we must do better in the future.

Hurricane Katrina is a national disaster. It is a national tragedy. And it will take a national effort to help people rebuild their homes, their cities, and their lives.

September 7, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Coast Guard Success in West Virginia

West Virginia recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Coast Guard's National Vessel Documentation Center (NVDC) in Falling Waters in Berkeley County. The Center has thrived during its decade as a Mountain State employer. The facility's success is a testament to the area's advanced telecommunications system, strong workforce, low cost of living, and outstanding quality of life.

After meeting with me in 1994, the Coast Guard announced plans to consolidate its Vessel Documentation Offices into one West Virginia location. Those offices were previously spread out through 14 cities across the country. The Coast Guard determined that consolidating its vessel documentation offices would save taxpayers \$1 million each year -- a prediction that has proved true. Since the establishment of the NVDC in West Virginia in 1995, program costs have been reduced by approximately \$17 million. The consolidation was a good federal investment, which provided substantial savings to the American taxpayer.

The center, which employs more than 100 people, facilitates maritime commerce while protecting economic privileges of United States citizens through the

enforcement of regulations, and provides a register of vessels available in a time of war or emergency to defend and protect the United States.

The NVDC is the second Coast Guard facility to locate in the Eastern Panhandle. In 1991, the Coast Guard used funds that I added to legislation to establish the Operations Systems Center (OSC) near Martinsburg. The OSC has since expanded and today has nearly 420 employees. The establishment of these two Coast Guard functions in the Eastern Panhandle was part of my ongoing effort to encourage the Coast Guard to locate operations in West Virginia.

The Coast Guard's decision to locate both the OSC and the NVDC in West Virginia demonstrates that, once an agency or business puts down roots in West Virginia, the state's many attributes encourage expansion.

The Coast Guard and West Virginia share many similarities. We both have a small but versatile and highly skilled workforce, and we both value our heritage and time-honored traditions. The agency's partnership with the Mountain State has a bright future as we forge ahead with innovative solutions and a "can do" attitude.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Top-Notch Medical Care Close to Home

From one end of the state to the other, West Virginia's medical facilities are fast developing into some of the best in the country. That progress is saving lives. Rural patients have greater access to doctors and nurses. People no longer have to travel long distances for specialized medical care. Technology, training, and cutting-edge facilities are helping doctors and nurses to better treat patients' illnesses. These efforts also are helping West Virginians to live longer, healthier lives.

Progress is plainly evident at the Byrd Health Sciences Center at West Virginia University (WVU) in Morgantown. And soon another critical piece of that campus will be under construction with the release of \$20 million in federal funding that I added to legislation for a new Biomedical Science Center.

Each day, doctors and researchers make amazing progress toward cures and treatments for diseases that have threatened lives for generations. WVU has proved an important resource for people suffering from cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and so many other debilitating and potentially fatal illnesses. The new WVU Biomedical Science Center will cement the university's position at the forefront of the nation's cutting-edge medical institutions. The new facility will be designed and equipped to foster research in areas

of special concern to West Virginians, such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and other serious illnesses.

Already, WVU is home to top-notch cancer and trauma centers. The West Virginia Eye Institute at WVU provides advanced care and treatments for maladies that otherwise would cause blindness. The Blanchette Rockefeller Neurosciences Institute, a priority for Senator Jay Rockefeller and named for his mother, is currently under construction. The Rockefeller Institute is bringing together some of the world's foremost experts in Alzheimer's disease and other brain illnesses.

Each of these facilities is based at West Virginia University. And each is helping to save countless lives. With the new Biomedical Science Center, WVU will be home to one of the most advanced health sciences centers and research institutes in the country.

"Knowledge belongs to humanity, and is the torch which illuminates the world," said Louis Pasteur, the French scientist whose work in microbiology beginning in the mid-19th century continues to serve as the basis for modern medicine today. It is my hope that the Biomedical Science Center will help to expand our knowledge of some of the most debilitating diseases facing mankind and lead to cures that today we can only imagine.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Take A Bite Out Of High-Tech Crime

For 25 years, the National Crime Prevention Council's "McGruff, the Crime Dog" has been teaching families how they can help to combat crime in their communities. McGruff and his signature "Take a Bite Out of Crime" message highlight the average citizen's role in public safety and crime prevention. The well-known dog's efforts are needed now more than ever as new types of crimes are striking innocent victims.

Facing these new challenges, McGruff today is focusing his crime-fighting skills on technology-related crimes. As more individuals use the Internet to communicate with family and friends, to make financial transactions, and to do retail shopping, criminals are finding new ways to exploit people's personal information. Identity theft and on-line fraud are the fastest growing technology crimes and affect millions of Americans each year.

As McGruff so often reminds us, we can take steps to help avoid being victims of these dangerous crimes. To prevent identity fraud, individuals should avoid providing any personal information via e-mail; they should report suspicious e-mails to their Internet service providers and the Federal Trade Commission; and they should install software

on their computers that protects from viruses and unsolicited e-mails.

In addition, be suspicious of electronic notices of prizes or cash awards that require personal information to claim the award. The old maxim is still true today: If the offer seems too good to be true, then it probably is. Lastly, parents should monitor their children's activity on the Internet and install software on the family computer that protects children from on-line sexual predators.

To learn more about how to prevent electronic crimes, call the National Crime Prevention Council at 1-800-627-2911 and request a copy of the free publication *Preventing Identity Theft: A Guide for Consumers* and the free action kit *Crime Prevention in the Information Age*. To read more about the history of McGruff, 25th anniversary activities, and what communities can do to support crime prevention, visit www.ncpc.org.

McGruff and the National Crime Prevention Council are helping to empower communities, in partnership with local law enforcement, to ensure safe and secure neighborhoods in West Virginia and across the country. As McGruff has told us all of these years, by working together, we can all help to "take a bite out of crime."



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Constitution Day 2005: A Great Success

On a September afternoon in Philadelphia in 1787, an amazing event took place. Some of the brightest and bravest men of that, or any, generation came together to forge the document that continues to guide our nation today: the Constitution of the United States.

The Constitution's Preamble established our government's purpose in just a few simple words: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." One paragraph, followed by a few pages, gave this nation direction and structure. We all cherish our liberty, and our liberty is enshrined in the Constitution.

Because it is so fundamental to each American, I have been increasingly concerned about the lack of understanding of the Constitution, especially by young people. Studies have shown that more young people know the names of the three Rice Krispies cereal characters than know the three branches of government. We need to put an end to such ignorance.

That's why, last fall, I wrote legislation creating Constitution Day. Because of this law, students across

the country are asked to spend some time every September 17 -- the date on which the Constitution was signed in 1787 -- learning more about our founding document.

This September, the nation marked the very first Constitution Day. I have been nearly overwhelmed by the excitement and the creativity that teachers and students have shown in celebrating this special day.

In West Virginia, hundreds of students gathered at Wheeling Jesuit University for a special day-long program on the Constitution. The West Virginia Department of Education produced a special television presentation, distributed to more than 200 schools, about the importance of the Constitution to young people and its roots that stretch back for hundreds of years. Some schools recreated the Constitutional Convention, with children portraying George Washington and Ben Franklin. Other schools took a closer look at our freedoms -- such as freedom of speech and freedom of religion and the right to bear arms -- and how each freedom needs to be guarded zealously.

From coast to coast, the inaugural Constitution Day was a great success. I look forward to next year's activities. More importantly, I look eagerly ahead to the day when Americans not only cherish the Constitution but also understand its content and its importance to our lives.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Stop the Scourge: End Domestic Violence

In West Virginia, there were more than 10,400 cases of domestic violence abuse in 2003 -- the most recent year for which statistics are available. That's more than 28 abusive crimes a day, every day of the year. Of those cases, 25 resulted in the victim's death. Domestic violence is a scourge. It is a despicable crime. The challenge ahead is to find a way to break this cycle of violence and abuse that endangers tens of thousands of lives. While this is not an easy challenge to meet, it is certainly a challenge that we must pursue.

That's why I sponsored the Violence Against Women Act of 2005. This legislation, which I am proud to report the Senate has approved, is a bipartisan effort to reauthorize and expand on the successes of the groundbreaking 1994 legislation of the same name. That law instituted a fundamental change in the criminal justice system's response to violent crimes committed against women. But, despite the progress, domestic violence continues to take a terrible toll on families. We cannot stand still.

This renewed legislation will put new resources into the hands of law enforcement, and new hope into the hearts of victims of abuse.

Law enforcement officials need stronger tools to combat domestic violence. That's why the legislation

would increase funding to more than \$400 million each year to law enforcement officials, lawyers, judges, and advocates. The legislation would stiffen existing criminal penalties for repeat federal domestic violence offenders and give federal prosecutors more discretion in charging stalking cases that occur on the Internet.

For victims of abuse, the Violence Against Women Act would strengthen support services. The bill would create a new, dedicated grant program to strengthen the 1,300 rape crisis centers across the country, reinvigorate programs to help older and disabled victims of domestic violence, enhance existing programs for rural victims and victims in underserved areas, and increase funding to \$5 million per year for the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

When we marry, we pledge to love and honor our spouse, and to comfort and care for that person. Beatings, rape, and even murder -- domestic violence makes a mockery of those vows. And while bruises and broken bones heal, the emotional and mental scars of abuse can last for a lifetime. As a society, we must get at the root of this problem. We have a moral obligation to stop domestic violence and to give those who suffer from it a chance for a better future.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Winning the Battle Against Breast Cancer

Each October, the nation marks "Breast Cancer Awareness Month" to focus attention on the disease and spread the message that early detection saves lives. Breast cancer accounts for one in three cancers diagnosed in American women, with 211,240 new invasive cases, including 1,410 in West Virginia, expected in 2005. It is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in U.S. women. Even more compelling than the statistics are the personal stories of struggle and loss, all too familiar to each of us.

One decade ago, breast cancer research was an unacceptably low federal funding priority. That is why I have worked with Senators from both parties to increase America's investment in life-saving breast cancer research. This year alone, the federal government will spend more than \$850 million on breast cancer research to improve detection and treatments so that one day there will be a cure for this deadly disease.

Our investment is paying off. While the number of breast cancer cases remains high, it is declining. The American Cancer Society reports that deaths from breast cancer have dropped steadily during the 1990s -- progress that is attributed to both early detection and better treatments.

Experts state that the most effective way to detect breast cancer is through a combination of clinical breast exams, regular self-

exams, and routine mammograms. Mammograms often can find breast cancer early, when treatments are most successful. Yet, many women who have either no health insurance or poor insurance policies cannot afford the cost of this life-saving test.

Fortunately, free mammograms and other cancer screening are available through the statewide breast and cervical cancer prevention, education, and screening project, launched in 1990 with funds I added to an appropriations bill. This initiative provides critical tests to West Virginians who otherwise might not have the access or the financial means to get them.

In addition, scientists at the Mary Babb Randolph Cancer Center at West Virginia University are treating cancer patients and helping to find a cure. The Cancer Center was established, in part, with \$13.3 million that I added to federal appropriations bills beginning in 1985. The facility provides patients with high quality, comprehensive breast cancer treatments.

By continuing the investment in cancer research and aggressively working to find a cure, I hope that one day we will not need a "Breast Cancer Awareness Month." But until that day arrives, I urge women to learn how to detect the disease at an early stage. Early detection remains the best key to survival.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting Nature's Beauty for All to Enjoy

Fall is here. That means high school football games and beautiful colors adorning the trees and the mountains. For many West Virginians, fall also means the start of the deer season for hunters, a tradition that many families pass from one generation to the next. While this is a proud tradition, it would disappear if there were no forests or rivers protected for this experience. No woods, no deer; no rivers, no fish.

That's one of the reasons why I have worked in the Senate to preserve and grow West Virginia's natural beauty.

For example, up until 1989, West Virginia was the only state without a National Wildlife Refuge. Imagine! Our state, so recognized for its scenic beauty, without a protected area for wildlife and unique trees and plants. I went to work to obtain the funding to establish the first refuge in the Mountain State -- the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge, headquartered in Parkersburg. Most of the refuge's islands are within West Virginia's segment of the river, stretching from the Northern Panhandle in Hancock County to south of Point Pleasant in Mason County. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service eventually plans to acquire

additional islands, for a potential total of 35, along a 400-mile stretch of the Ohio River between Pennsylvania and Kentucky.

The Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge was the country's 500th refuge. The Tucker County refuge is one of the largest and most diverse freshwater wetland areas in central and southern Appalachia. The incredible diversity of plants and habitats support an equally varied wildlife of more than 290 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish.

The Monongahela National Forest; the New River Gorge National River; wilderness areas like Dolly Sods, Otter Creek, Cranberry, Laurel Fork North, and Laurel Fork South -- so many places in West Virginia are unique reminders of the beauty of nature and the handiwork of the Creator.

Protecting and growing these amazing sites guarantees that they will be enjoyed for generations to come. It matters not whether one is a hunter or a photographer, a hiker or a skier; each West Virginian can appreciate the beauty of the lands around us, and each of us can do our part to make sure that these precious resources are preserved for decades to come.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

In Thanksgiving

As communities along the Gulf Coast clean up from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as Florida reels from yet another hurricane, as casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan soar, and as scandal engulfs the White House, it might seem difficult to find anything to be thankful for on this Thanksgiving.

Many families' prospects for rebuilding the lives they once knew are uncertain, but there is hope. There is also much to celebrate as Americans gather for Thanksgiving. We may be thankful that the loss of life from those hurricanes was not greater. We can celebrate the support that erupted from Americans and from friends around the world. The public response to the Gulf Coast disasters proved that the nation's sense of community remains strong.

In Iraq, we can celebrate the performance of our troops. Whatever the circumstances under which they were sent, the U.S. military has performed their duties with courage and dedication under the most dangerous conditions.

Even the scandal washing over the President's closest advisors may give cause for celebration, and not for partisan reasons. Americans may be thankful

for our system of government with its checks and balances. We may celebrate the wisdom of guaranteeing freedom of expression and a free press. Without those guarantees, Ambassador Wilson could not have told the truth about his mission to Niger.

We can be grateful that the Constitution's checks and balances remain a strong tool for oversight and accountability. That is what keeps this country strong. President Abraham Lincoln said, "Let the people know the truth and the country is safe." Whatever the final outcome of these investigations, the nation is safer and better off for having the means to challenge possible abuses of power.

So, even in these dark days, there are reasons to give thanks. I hope the recent dip in gasoline prices will allow families to gather together and set a table overflowing with home-cooked food. There are few days devoted entirely to family. Thanksgiving is the one time we can really focus on all that we have to be thankful for just by looking around the table.

Erma joins me in wishing a happy Thanksgiving to all West Virginians. May each of you be blessed this Thanksgiving.

November 16, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Broken Budget for West Virginia

In the coming weeks, the Congress will vote on a new federal budget. This budget jeopardizes many initiatives that are important to our state, while setting the stage for massive cuts in services and a huge hike in our nation's debt in the months ahead.

When President Bush took office, his Administration was handed a balanced budget with record surpluses. The economy was moving full-speed ahead. But now, record surpluses have been replaced by record deficits, and the national debt is growing at an alarming pace. In fact, the budget crafted by the Republican Senate Leadership will cause the national debt to rise to more than \$11.3 trillion in the next five years. But, this irresponsible budget doesn't stop there.

This unfair budget plan increases Medicare Part B premiums while slashing \$24 billion from Medicaid. In West Virginia, 350,000 senior citizens, many on fixed incomes, rely on Medicare to help pay their doctor bills. Medicaid provides health care for 300,000 West Virginians, primarily the poor and uninsured children. These West Virginians are not given a choice about the cuts in services; they are simply told to deal with the

reductions.

The cuts in the proposed budget help to make room for massive tax breaks for multi-millionaires and Washington, D.C., special interests.

Certainly these budgetary tax cut goodies do not help most working West Virginians very much. People with incomes between \$50,000 and \$200,000 would see a tax break of only \$112, while those earning less than \$50,000 would receive a tiny \$6 tax cut.

The median West Virginia household income is \$31,504. Cutting programs vital to the people of our state is an unfair way to pay for tax cuts for millionaires.

As Americans, and as people who believe in a Creator and a moral society, we share a responsibility to protect those who may need help -- to feed the hungry, to care for the sick, to house the homeless. This budget scoffs at those moral principles. Americans are a kind and generous people, and that spirit is alive and well in West Virginia. Just look at the way our state reached out to help the victims of Katrina. Those are the kinds of values our national budget should reflect, and this particular spending plan is way off the mark.

November 2, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Veterans Day: Recognizing A Debt of Honor

West Virginians have been part of every military effort to protect the nation's interests abroad. Our state's sons and daughters have always been prepared to fight for our country. Each of us owes a great debt to our veterans, and to the men and women in our Armed Forces today who will be veterans tomorrow. We owe our veterans thanks; we owe them honor; and we owe them our support.

Part of that support is in providing the medical care that they were promised when they enlisted in the military. President Abraham Lincoln said that it was the nation's duty "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan." Unfortunately, the federal government has been more than stingy when it comes to meeting President Lincoln's standard.

This year alone, the Bush Administration underfunded veterans' medical care by more than \$1 billion. Fearing that veterans would see their medical services cut off or needlessly delayed, I went to work to fill the funding shortfall, and the Congress approved my work. As a result, none of West Virginia's 187,000 veterans saw their medical care disappear because of

the Administration's budget shenanigans.

Now, the challenge is to take care of a shortfall for next year. We know that the veterans' medical care budget is going to run out of funding. The Congress needs to step up and make sure that our veterans receive the care that they were promised.

Our veterans served, and many died, so that this country might be able to fulfill the great hope of our Founding Fathers. Our veterans answered the call of their country and they did not fail it, even in death. And it is proper and it is right that we take one day a year to pay our most profound respect to the men and women who have worn our nation's uniform, to thank them, and to recommit ourselves to their support.

This Veterans Day, I thank our veterans for their service to our country. I hope everyone will join in offering a prayer of thanks to the brave men and women who did not come home from battle, who defended us with their lives. May God bless all West Virginians who have fought and sacrificed for the preservation of our nation's freedom and our nation's interests throughout the world.

November 9, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Saving Money on Energy

Hurricanes, increasing energy demand, and insufficient energy production are setting the stage for an expensive winter. Many people will struggle to afford the skyrocketing costs of gasoline and home heating during the coming cold months.

The federal government needs to step up to the plate and pass additional measures to achieve energy savings. Congress needs to crack down on price gouging and smartly expand production capacity. The federal government also needs to support new technologies, like coal-to-oil conversion, that can use America's natural resources in a clean, efficient manner.

At the same time, there are steps that individuals can take to save money this winter.

To limit trips to the gas station, slow down and drive the speed limit. Speeding and rapid acceleration can lower gas mileage by 33 percent at highway speeds and five percent around town.

Another way to minimize gas usage is to consolidate errands. Several short trips taken from a cold start can use twice as much fuel as combining all stops covering the same distance when the engine is warm.

Keep vehicles in good working condition, ensuring that the engine is properly tuned and checking and

replacing air filters regularly. Replacing a clogged air filter can improve gas mileage by as much as 10 percent. Also, keeping tires inflated properly improves gas mileage by more than three percent. These tips will help to keep money in drivers' pockets, and out of the pockets of the big oil companies this winter.

People also can save money on home heating costs. On sunny days, open curtains and blinds to let the sunlight in and then close them again at night to protect against cold air. Run washing machines and dryers only with full loads. Set water heater temperatures at 120 degrees, which cuts water heating bills without sacrificing comfort. "Winterizing" one's home can cut costs, as well. Caulking and weatherstripping doors and windows takes little time and can be done with inexpensive, widely available materials. Programmable thermostats, insulation, and storm windows are just a few products that can pay for themselves from savings in home heating bills.

For other energy money saving tips, please visit my Internet site, <http://byrd.senate.gov>. High energy prices don't have to keep West Virginians out of their cars and in the cold this winter. Small steps can make a big difference in families' budgets this winter.

November 23, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Standing With Our Veterans

Across this great nation, we are proud of our veterans. The battlefields may have been far away -- Iwo Jima, Berlin, the Chosin Reservoir, the Mekong Delta, Kabul, and Fallujah. But our veterans' devotion to their country gave them courage under fire.

President Abraham Lincoln noted in his Second Inaugural Address that, in thanks for their service to our country, America should always "...care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan." That is a heavy responsibility and a solemn duty. Unfortunately, President Lincoln's admonishment appears to have been forgotten in some quarters.

A few months ago, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reported a massive financial shortfall that, if left unaddressed, could threaten the health care that veterans receive each day from the VA. The VA budget was in the red by billions of dollars, and fast Congressional action was needed.

Working with concerned Senators from both political parties, I steered funding through the Congress intended to ensure that VA medical care would continue uninterrupted for 2005. In addition, Congress recently approved more than \$22.5 billion to protect veterans' health care for

2006, including \$1.2 billion in "contingent emergency" funding. That "emergency" designation means that the dollars can be shifted to the VA medical centers in West Virginia and across the country immediately -- but only if President Bush also designates the funds as an emergency. I hope that he will. I have written to the President and urged him to speed these funds to our veterans and ensure that there are no delays in their medical treatments.

At this point, the VA expects the \$1.2 billion to cover any 2006 shortfall, and, in my position on the Senate Appropriations Committee, I will do my best to make sure that veterans' health care is not short-changed.

Each day, new veterans come home from war. These men and women have made us proud. Many of these 21st century veterans have specialized health care needs. The battlefields of today are inflicting wounds unlike those experienced by the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines of past wars.

Treating these injuries requires well-trained doctors and nurses, a dedicated staff, modern equipment, and money. We must be ready to respond. Veterans' health care is a responsibility that we must never shirk.

November 30, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Saving Lives of Trauma Patients

Accidents and injuries are an unavoidable part of life. The care that individuals receive in the moments following a trauma can be the difference between life and death. The Jon Michael Moore Trauma Center at West Virginia University (WVU) Hospitals has been saving lives for 17 years and recently earned national recognition for its top-notch standard of care.

The Trauma Center is named after my grandson, Jon Michael Moore, who lost his life in 1982 in a fiery truck accident. My family and I experienced all of the emotions that accompany such a tragedy -- anger, depression, loss. But with God's grace and the love and the support of friends and family, we endured.

Today, doctors and nurses at the Jon Michael Moore Trauma Center work each day to help other families cope with trauma and tragedy. My grandson would be humbled to have this facility named in his memory, and his family is hugely proud of the center's incredible record of treating victims of tragedy. This is a tremendous legacy.

The Jon Michael Moore Trauma Center has been dually honored for its stellar patient care. The American College of Surgeons Committee has renewed the hospital's Level One trauma center status, making it one of only 31 Level One cen-

ters in the country for both children and adults trauma. West Virginia's Office of Emergency Medical Systems also has redesignated the facility as a Level One center. This recognition means that WVU's trauma center meets or exceeds all national standards for the care of severely injured persons. It means that it is one of the best of its kind in the entire country.

The Jon Michael Moore Trauma Center treats more than 3,000 patients annually and is one of only a handful of nationally recognized Level One trauma centers serving a mostly rural population. West Virginians should take great pride in this shining star among the state's many excellent health care facilities.

I know that the Jon Michael Moore Trauma Center will continue to excel. Every minute of every hour of every day, this team of highly skilled doctors and nurses and technicians is committed to saving lives. They work under extreme pressure, and they know that their every decision has great consequence. But these men and women have proved themselves to be up to the challenge.

I congratulate the Jon Michael Moore Trauma Center on its national recognition and its service to our state. May the Hands of the Great Physician continue to guide the patients and staff at this remarkable place.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Celebrating the True Christmas Story

Christmas is one of my favorite times of the year, a time of joy and love, of family gatherings and warm memories. Too often today, though, big sales and the shopping frenzy try to take Christ out of Christmas. The meaning of Christmas is overshadowed by the pressures and strains of a commercialized holiday.

At its core, Christmas will always be about a couple who found no shelter but a manger, and also about a newborn child who would become the Savior of the world.

That is why, each year at this time, I reread the Christmas story in the Gospel of Luke. My Christmas wish is that all of us will remember the words and, more importantly, the true meaning of this sacred season.

"All went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

"And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought

forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

"And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

In these days of rushing and wrapping, I hope that West Virginians will take the time to focus on the great and glorious meaning of Christmas.

My wife, Erma, and I wish for all West Virginians a happy and holy Christmas and New Year.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Finding a Solution to Our Energy Crisis

Fact: The world is running out of oil. The Chief Executive Officer of Exxon-Mobil predicts that less than half of the oil needed to meet world demand by 2010 can be supplied by existing oil fields. When that time of "scarceness" arrives, competition for remaining oil will likely become cut-throat, possibly triggering monumental changes in the economies, societies, and relationships between the nations of the world.

In reality, backfilling an oil shortfall will take a variety of energy sources. Renewable resources like hydro, solar and wind power, and biomass, along with finite resources like natural gas, all must be part of a comprehensive national effort to shake off the oil addiction. And a major player in any such effort must be coal and coal-based technologies. Coal has been used to make diesel and jet fuels for 80 years. Moreover, synfuels made from coal burn cleaner and perform better than petroleum. We can produce synthetic fuels in West Virginia, using our own abundant supply of coal, natural gas, and other resources. All we need is the money, the right policies, and the commitment to do it.

I congratulate Governor Manchin for stepping into the energy policy debate. He and others are making an effort to wake the Ameri-

can public to our looming energy crisis. But they are not just ringing alarm bells. They also have a blueprint which can be part of a solution. They want to develop domestic energy sources and produce jobs and economic security, as well as ensure a dependable, affordable, clean American-based energy supply.

By encouraging the cleaner, more efficient use of coal in power plants and other facilities, we help to ensure jobs in West Virginia for many years to come. Our brain power, coal reserves, and excellent workforce can lead the way to America's energy independence. It is time to devote new innovation and ingenuity to energy policy and blaze new trails.

Just as President Kennedy did when he sent this nation on a mission to put a man on the moon, this government can begin an intense clean coal research and development program similar to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Program of the 1960s. Like the research done for the space program, such energy research will produce spin-offs that create jobs, improve life, secure our energy future, and bolster our national security. Not even with our best crystal ball can we fully know what fantastic gains can be made, and we should not delay in starting.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Reflections on 2005

As we bid farewell to 2005, it is a fitting time to reflect on the events that have impacted humankind throughout the year. We have seen a sobering amount of human suffering in the past year, with the tsunami in Southeast Asia devastating hundreds of thousands of lives, and then the earthquakes that brought tragedy that was felt around the world. We are mindful, too, of America's own tragedies with hurricanes Katrina and Rita, which wreaked unspeakable havoc on those people living in the Gulf Coast region.

But, in the face of such adversity, there is strength in the generous and giving nature of the American people. Many West Virginians heeded the call, time and again, to give comfort to those less fortunate. West Virginia's Mountaineers came together in the spirit of goodwill and Christian love to help those near and far in times of great need.

After Hurricane Katrina, food and clothing drives sprang up throughout the state. Students organized and collected thousands of school supplies and toys for children left with nothing. Virtually every community in the state found ways to help, from pancake breakfasts and raffles, to gospel sings and blood drives.

Perhaps the strong show of support is because West Virginians are no strangers

to sacrifice. As we know all too well, the elements of Mother Nature can be harsh and unrelenting. West Virginians know the blessings of prosperity, but also the difficulties and hardships that life can bring. In the worst of times, the people of our state are often at their best.

In times of sorrow and uncertainty, I am comforted by the words of the Lord. Second Corinthians tells us, "Though our outward man may perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Mountaineers have always been a special breed of people and proved that again in 2005. Our people served proudly in the military in faraway lands. West Virginians banded together to help their fellow Americans survive tragedy. Together, we overcame the challenges of 2005.

As we mark the start of this New Year, I thank the Creator for His blessings on our state and nation, and I wish all West Virginians a happy, safe, and prosperous 2006.

December 21, 2005



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Lessons from the Leadership of Gerald R. Ford

The President of the United States is a powerful figure in this country. The President sets the tone for the nation. He can either challenge us to reach for our better angels, or take actions that serve to deeply divide the country. The president can either promote an agenda that brings the American people together, or he can press for policies that split us apart.

In the summer of 1974, the country was suffering. President Richard Nixon's actions in the Watergate affair only compounded the anger and distrust that people felt over the Vietnam War. The country was near a boiling point. President Nixon, on the verge of being impeached by the House of Representatives, resigned from office, elevating Gerald R. Ford -- a former Congressman from Michigan, a former Republican Leader in the House of Representatives, and the then Vice President of the United States -- to our country's highest Executive Office.

Many people across the country did not know President Ford very well. Few knew the quality of the man, as he had never run for office outside of his Congressional district. I knew Gerald Ford, having worked with him in the Congress, and I had confidence that he would be the kind of presi-

dent that we needed at that moment in time.

Gerald Ford brought to the presidency a humble tone very different from that of President Nixon. He worked to heal the nation after one of the most turbulent periods in our history. His actions were defined by his patriotism and his belief that America had to move forward instead of looking back. I have always been impressed with the quiet determination that President Ford showed in office. He understood that sharp partisanship does not serve the country well, and that political parties need to work together to forge solutions to the challenges we face.

That is a lesson that should be remembered today in Washington, D.C. Too often, more attention is paid to scoring political points than is paid to working for the American people.

As the new Congress begins, we have an opportunity to come together and put the people's priorities first. That means focusing on those issues that West Virginia families and families all across our country are most concerned about -- good jobs; access to better health care; improved classrooms. If we pull together, Democrats and Republicans, we can find the best solutions for America.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

United in Sorrow, Determination

West Virginia has once again proved what makes our state unique. As calamity struck the miners in Upshur County, West Virginians banded together in support of those men and their families. When news came that 12 of those 13 souls had not survived the explosion at the mine, West Virginians united to console the families, and to continue to pray for the survivor, Randal McCloy, Jr.

Each miner faces physical dangers with a knowledge that every other miner with him is his brother. Together, they do their jobs with extraordinary bravery and professionalism. The Sago miners were brothers. They worked together; they struggled together; and together today, they are with the Lord.

As the families grieve, they also deserve to know what happened in that mine. One of the finest tributes we could pay to these families and their lost loved ones would be to take steps to help prevent other families from ever experiencing such pain.

To do that, the federal and state investigations will move forward to determine what happened in that mine to spark the explosion and whether the explosion could have been prevented.

In Congress, there are tough questions to be asked of the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration

(MSHA). Is enforcement of coal mining regulations tough enough? In the last five years, nearly 200 federal coal enforcement personnel have lost their jobs because of budget cuts. Are the regulations on the books today current enough to handle the challenges posed by 21st century coal mining? Are mine hazards being minimized? During the past several years, many key mining health and safety improvements have been delayed or discontinued by MSHA. These and other issues demand scrutiny, and the miners' families deserve the answers. I will work in the Senate to get the truth.

West Virginians know coal mining. The mines are near our homes. The mining industry has employed our families, in some cases for several generations. We understand the risks. But we also understand that coal miners deserve protection. They must know that rules and regulations, put in place for the well-being of the miners and nearby communities, are not being overlooked or disregarded.

In this hour of prayer and tragedy, West Virginia will honor these men, and hold close their families and friends. But we must also do everything possible to prevent other mining families from experiencing such terrible pain. That should be the legacy of the Sago miners.

Wednesday, January 4, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

New Congress Brings New Opportunities

As the new Congress begins, I will take every opportunity to refocus our government's attention on the issues that matter most to West Virginians. I know from countless conversations with constituents throughout the state that there is a strong desire for change.

The American people expect Members of Congress to work together. The nation is tired of divisive partisan rhetoric. There is a clear mandate for the 110th Congress to put more energy towards working to achieve practical results for the people, and less on hatching political victories.

Though the Democrats now hold a majority in the Senate by the thinnest of margins, I believe the shift in power presents Congress with an opportunity to undo the partisan gridlock that has impeded good government in recent years. The new Congress will work longer hours, and we are resolved to be more open and inclusive. We will dust off the traditions of dialogue, deliberation, and decorum that have been shelved in recent years.

I intend to reach out to my Republican colleagues on the Budget Committee for their input and assistance in restoring the fiscal balance and responsibility that Americans expect from their government.

The views of my colleagues across the political aisle on the Committee on Armed Services will be welcomed, respected, and carefully considered. It will take a bipartisan effort to untangle ourselves from Iraq and provide for our national security. It will take the collective political will of both parties to meet the challenges of providing adequate care and services for our new generation of veterans.

Though needed reforms in the earmarking process are being implemented until we return fiscal responsibility and accountability to the budget process, I will continue to be mindful of the needs of my home state of West Virginia as I return to the role of Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations.

Americans have given Congress a resounding mandate to set the country on a more stable, responsible path to domestic progress and prosperity, while strengthening national security. I am excited about the opportunities this new Congress presents, and optimistic about the future of this great nation.

Progress will require hard work and great personal commitment. I stand ready and eager to continue to serve the great state of West Virginia and this great nation.

January 10, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Honoring Dr. King's Living Legacy

The greatness of women and men is often best judged from a historical perspective. History gives us the detached viewpoint that allows us to better understand and appreciate the person, the cause, and the legacy. This happens because great individuals often have been leaders who challenged the status quo as they pushed the country into areas where it had feared to go. As a result, such leaders often arouse criticism and opposition. That criticism certainly followed the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

But time and the march of history afford a better understanding of Dr. King and his contributions toward making the United States a better, stronger, and greater nation.

That is why this year, as the nation marks the anniversary of Dr. King's birthday, it is important to look at what we, as a people, have done to improve our country since his death, and understand what more needs to be done.

His work included all Americans. When Dr. King stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and proclaimed, "I have a dream," he looked forward to the time "when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catho-

lics, will be able to join hands." Dr. King's efforts also focused on the economic rights of economically deprived people of all races and creeds, as well as on civil rights. In this quest, he proposed a Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged. He advocated a Guaranteed National Income. At the time of his death, Dr. King was organizing a "Poor People's March" on Washington, an effort meant to focus national attention on poverty among not only African-Americans, but also among the poor whites of Appalachia, as well.

Dr. King's vision was not only about what America could be, but also what America should be.

I have come to appreciate how Martin Luther King, Jr., sought to help our nation overcome racial barriers, bigotry, hatred, and injustice, and how he helped to inspire and guide a most important, most powerful, and most transforming social movement.

With his works as well as his words, Dr. King left us a legacy that inspires and guides millions of Americans today. It is a legacy that demonstrates that human problems, no matter how big or complex, can be addressed -- a legacy that proves that one determined person can make a difference.

January 11, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Finding Ways to Protect Our Miners

In the days since the fatal Sago mine tragedy, we all have sought to find answers to the most basic questions. What sparked this explosion? Could it have been prevented? What can be done to make sure that it does not happen again, in West Virginia or anywhere across the country?

Investigation teams will work to determine the explosion's cause and what happened in the immediate aftermath. So that they are thorough and accurate, these reports will take time.

The Congress has a responsibility to look at the Sago tragedy, as well. The federal agency tasked with keeping order at coal mines is the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). In the days since the explosion, many questions have been raised about MSHA. Are there enough inspectors checking on mining operations? Are safety violations handled appropriately? Does MSHA have an effective system in place to respond quickly to mining disasters?

I recently met with MSHA officials to learn about their progress in the explosion investigation and, more importantly, to get their view of the culture of safety in our nation's mines. After hearing what these officials had to say, I still have lingering concerns. I believe that the federal gov-

ernment can do more to protect coal miners. We need more inspectors. We need more resources. Because of decisions made by officials in Washington, the federal mine safety agency is understaffed, underfunded, and underequipped.

A focus on modern technology could help. We owe it to the Sago miners to update technology in the areas of mine safety and rescue operations. Right now, safety and rescue equipment is 30 to 40 years old. We can send machines to Mars and communicate with them almost instantaneously; we ought to be able to talk with miners trapped 250 feet below ground. There have been plenty of technological advances in mining equipment over the years, but miner safety and health have not been given the same priority.

Next week, the Senate Appropriations Committee will hold the first of what I expect will be many Congressional hearings into the operations of MSHA. My message at that hearing will be clear. We must take a hard look at the Sago mine tragedy; learn its lessons; and do whatever is necessary to protect miners from a repeat of this disaster. MSHA needs to remember that its mission is mine health and safety, and that mission must always come first.

January 18, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Mine Safety for the 21st Century

In the wake of the fatal mine tragedies in our state this month which claimed the lives of 14 men, all of us have been searching for ways to prevent repeat incidents. One of the most glaring shortfalls in mine safety is the out-of-date technology that is used in America's mines.

Much of today's mine safety equipment was developed 30 to 40 years ago. Here we are, in the year 2006, relying on safety technology that was put in place in 1966.

Emergency breathing equipment provides trapped miners with one hour of oxygen. Yet, at Sago, it took nearly 11 hours for rescue teams to enter the mine and begin their search. That's unacceptable.

In this age of instant communications, there was no way to communicate with the 12 men at Sago and the two men trapped at the Aracoma Alma mine in Logan County. That, too, is unacceptable.

Despite global positioning satellites and wireless remote technologies, rescuers used best guesses to drill through hundreds of feet of rock and soil, hoping that the trapped Sago miners would hear the drill and signal their location. A guessing game is no way to pinpoint miners when every minute is the difference between life and death.

Federal mining officials have stated that there is no

off-the-shelf technology that can solve these communications problems. They're wrong.

The Defense Department has tracking technology that can be readily adapted for mines.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health is advancing technology that will significantly expand the emergency oxygen supplies that miners can carry with them.

Private companies also are working to adapt everyday technologies for mine safety. For example, many cell phone users are familiar with text messaging where a brief message can be sent to one's mobile phone. This same technology exists in a piece of mining equipment, first developed in Australia. The small device, worn on a miner's belt, allows for instant text messages from the surface. Despite the advantages and relative affordability, the manufacturer reports that only 14 mines across the country utilize this device. That's 14 out of 15,000 deep mines nationwide. The nation must do better by our miners.

We all mourn the deaths of the 12 men at the Sago mine and the two men at the Aracoma Alma mine. But their deaths should not be in vain. The country needs to wake up to the dangers of mining -- many of which could be avoided by bringing mine safety technology into the 21st century.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Urgency of Mine Safety

This week, two more West Virginia coal miners lost their lives on the job. Two more families have seen their worlds turned upside down. In the first 32 days of this new year, the Mountain State suffered as 16 coal miners have died -- first in Upshur County, then in Logan County, and now in Boone County. Miners and their families throughout the state are wondering where the next explosion will occur, what will spark the next fire, and will it be at their mine.

We are facing a safety crisis. The time for talk is over. We've got to take steps now to protect lives.

The West Virginia Congressional Delegation has introduced legislation in the House of Representatives and the Senate that has one simple aim: the prevention of future fatal mine tragedies. As a united Delegation, we share the strong belief that coal miners deserve the best protections and the best safety enforcement possible. The longer we wait to make positive changes in mine safety, the more risk coal miners face on the job. We have a moral obligation to get this done.

The West Virginia Delegation's federal mine safety package focuses on sev-

eral areas, including rapid notification and response, tougher penalties for safety violations, emergency communications and breathing equipment, and expanded use of advanced safety technologies.

The tragedies at the Sago and Alma mines highlighted gross weaknesses in mine emergency preparedness, and the failure of leadership at the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) to get tough about rescue procedures and safety initiatives. The status quo is not good enough; the status quo is putting lives at risk. If the federal agency will not take steps on its own, then the Congress must take the lead and, if need be, poke, prod, and push MSHA into fulfilling its mandate.

We need more than platitudes to protect the safety of our nation's miners. We need resources. We need swift action. We need to impress deeply upon the psyche of MSHA and of the nation's coal mine operators that the safety of miners will not be compromised for personal profit or politics. Protecting the safety of our miners is a moral responsibility, and I, for one, will never, ever, forget that obligation.

February 1, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Meeting Our Troops' Needs

I am proud of the men and women of America's Armed Forces. Whether active duty, Reservist, or National Guard, our troops volunteer for their jobs; they carry out their missions; they risk their lives. In return, they only ask for the support of their country, both in terms of equipment and resources during their service and medical care when they come home.

This week, one West Virginia soldier's story caught the attention of the nation, and I hope that it serves as a wake-up call for the civilian leadership and the top brass at the Pentagon.

First Lieutenant William Rebrook was medically discharged from the Army after he suffered shrapnel wounds in Iraq. After he was attacked, military medics evacuated him from the battlefield. His body armor was removed so that emergency doctors could treat his wounds. That was the last time that Lieutenant Rebrook saw that armor.

Before he could be discharged and return home to Charleston, the military handed him a \$700 bill for his destroyed body armor. I find it astounding that the Pentagon would ask soldiers, wounded in battle, to pay for equipment damaged or destroyed during their service.

At a hearing this week of the Armed Services Committee, I brought the case of

Lieutenant Rebrook to the attention of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and General Peter Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I urged them to take this story, and so many others like it, seriously. Already, friends and family members of many soldiers have dug deep into their pockets to pay for body armor and other key pieces of equipment. And when a soldier is injured, he or she should not be forced to pay for equipment that doctors and medical teams discard so they can treat those injuries.

Our soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen are the finest in the world. All Americans owe them a debt of gratitude for their service to our country. But we also owe them something more. We owe them not only mega-million dollar missiles and tanks and airplanes but also basic body armor and detection devices to protect them from the deadly nickel-and-dime IEDs of the Iraqi insurgency. And we owe them a military health care system and a veterans' benefits program that serve them as well as they have served the nation.

The Pentagon needs to remember that the military's strength is not centered in fancy weapons systems, but in the spirit and courage of the men and women who serve in our nation's Armed Forces.

February 8, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Balance the Federal Checkbook

West Virginians know how to budget. We know how much money will be in our paychecks and how much our bills will be. We plan for big costs and put a little aside when we can for unforeseen emergencies. It's common sense.

But the federal government doesn't seem to understand how to budget to pay today's bills while saving for those unforeseen emergencies. The White House recently sent to Congress its latest budget, a proposal that ignores common sense and results in growing debt for as far as the eye can see. In fact, under this budget, the Administration admits that the debt will grow to a mind-boggling \$11.5 trillion by 2011 -- a more than \$3 trillion jump in the next five years.

In the time from President George Washington to the start of President George W. Bush's term, the United States took on debt totaling \$5.6 trillion. According to the White House budget documents, the debt that took 212 years to acquire will stunningly double in size by 2011.

Imagine that a family paid its mortgage, doctor's bills, grocery bills, and utilities with the credit card. The debt grows and grows and grows. That's what we have in this Administration budget. The debt explodes, and the financial pressure

facing future generations continues without pause.

It's time for responsible federal budgeting.

In the coming weeks, the Senate will roll up its sleeves and rewrite the White House budget, seeking to inject some common sense and accountability. Senators also will work to write a budget that reflects the priorities of the country. I, for one, want the government to make good on its promises of health care to our seniors and our veterans, invest in teachers and resources in our classrooms, and protect the country from another terrorist attack. I also want the federal budget to support efforts to create jobs, give a boost to small businesses, and provide American manufacturers with the tools that they need to compete around the world.

Most importantly, we've got to be responsible and turn around this massive federal debt. Each day that the debt is allowed to grow is another day of higher interest rates on mortgages and student loans and car payments. An out-of-control debt results in a back-door tax hike on West Virginia families, and it has to stop.

"Families balance their checkbooks. They work hard to make ends meet and live within their means. It is long past time for the federal government to do the same.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Tax Incentives for Energy Savings

As energy prices reach record highs, West Virginians are finding it more and more difficult to hold onto their hard earned dollars. While Congress continues to look into ways to ease the burden, it has already taken steps to help offset some energy costs.

Last year, the Congress passed the Energy Policy Act (EPACT). Included within EPACT are incentives that provide tax credits when a person purchases energy-efficient products. Consumers who buy approved items this year will be able to take full advantage of these incentives when filing their taxes next year.

For example, EPACT incentives can help to keep down the costs of renovating a house or business. The tax credits are available on the purchase and installation of energy-efficient products including insulation, windows, doors, and roofing materials. Taking advantage of this opportunity could potentially save thousands of dollars for West Virginians who decide to move ahead with these kind of home improvement projects.

The EPACT tax incentives are not only useful for big renovation projects but also for smaller

ones. When looking to purchase a new stove or washer and dryer, it can save money to explore options that qualify for a tax break. EPACT provides incentives for consumers who buy more energy-efficient clothes washers, heatpumps, air conditioners, water heaters, dishwashers, and refrigerators. These "Energy Star" qualified appliances will not only provide hundreds of dollars in tax credits, but also will run more efficiently, saving money on energy bills for years to come.

These tax incentives can be money in the bank for West Virginia families. They help to lower the cost of home projects and new appliances, and also can point the way to a future where America is far less dependent on foreign oil and other energy sources.

We have to break the grip that foreign energy producers have on our country, and these smart investments in more efficient products in our homes is a step in the right direction.

Check with local retailers about energy efficient products that qualify for the tax incentives. For more information, visit my website, <http://byrd.senate.gov>.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting Against Identity Theft

The Internet plays a big part of many people's daily lives. But it also has dangers, and West Virginians need to be alert. Everyday, millions of Americans visit the Internet, using new technologies that make commonplace activities like shopping, banking, and traveling easier and more efficient. Unfortunately, some people are using the same technologies, with increasing savvy, to commit fraud and theft.

In 2005, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) received more than 1,800 fraud complaints from West Virginians, with identity theft leading the list. Statistics showed that identity thieves used various schemes to perpetrate their crimes, including phony Internet auctions, catalogue sales scams, fake sweepstakes, bogus foreign money offers, and computer service scams. Victims of such crimes suffer long-term, often devastating damage to their finances and credit records.

The federal government's law enforcement efforts go after the perpetrators on several fronts. The FTC and other agencies use many tools to track down, catch, and punish these criminals. However, they cannot do it alone. *Prevention, education, and reporting* are the most important lines of defense, and consumers must be smart and protect themselves.

To help prevent being a victim of identity theft, it is important to maintain anti-

virus software, spyware, and an effective firewall to shield personal computers from violators. Also, be cautious when sharing private information online. Personal details should only be given to individuals or companies with which one regularly does business. The FTC also recommends that Internet users not open and immediately delete all unsolicited e-mail communications, commonly referred to as "spam" or "junk e-mails."

It is also important to stay informed about existing and emerging scams. Several websites are devoted to alerting consumers to new scams and suggesting ways to avoid them, including www.fraud.org and www.staysafeonline.org.

Finally, be sure to report scams and cases of fraud and identity theft. Those who fear that they might have been a victim of identity theft should check their credit reports, close any accounts that have been tampered with, file reports with local police, and contact the FTC.

For other helpful website links and information about how to file a complaint, visit my website at <http://byrd.senate.gov>.

The Internet can be a great tool for education and information. But it also can serve as a fertile field for fraud. West Virginians need to be careful Internet users to ensure that they get the most benefit from the Internet without suffering from illegal scams.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting the People's Liberties

As a U.S. Senator, I have sworn an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. I take this role seriously and am deeply concerned that Americans' Constitutional right to privacy has been violated by the Bush Administration's domestic spying programs. West Virginians should be concerned, too.

It has come to light that, in 2002, President Bush signed a secret order to allow the National Security Agency to eavesdrop on U.S. citizens without a warrant, even though there are laws against such domestic spying. The White House says that it did not have time to obtain the proper legal authority to listen to those conversations. This claim is false. In fact, our laws provide that surveillance can continue for several days before a warrant is required. The Administration's actions deserve close scrutiny. Violations of the Bill of Rights and of our laws must not be swept under the rug.

It must be determined if the First Amendment right to free speech and the Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable searches and seizures, which are guaranteed by the Constitution, were violated by government eavesdropping. We have entered very dangerous waters when the government can spy on citizens without even so much as a warrant.

Constitutional freedoms will never be abolished in one fell swoop. The American people cherish

their freedoms and would not tolerate such a loss. But the erosion of freedom usually occurs as a gradual process, cloaked in secrecy, and glossed over by claims of necessity for greater security. A climate of fear and secrecy can take a hefty toll on the people's liberties.

That is why I have introduced legislation to establish an independent, nonpartisan commission to investigate warrantless surveillance on law-abiding American citizens. This commission should investigate the legality of the Administration's secret domestic spying program to shed much-needed sunshine on any unlawful or unconstitutional executive intrusions into the lives of ordinary Americans. It could then determine how best to protect the homeland, while also safeguarding the Bill of Rights.

An independent commission is vital because the Senate Intelligence rejected a proposal by Senator Rockefeller to begin a thorough, bipartisan investigation into the domestic spying. I support Senator Rockefeller's efforts. He has worked diligently to ensure that the Administration, even in its most secret circles, follows the law and the Constitution.

Preventing more terrorist attacks must be Congress' utmost priority. But it is spurious to suggest that the American people will be safer in their homes if only they forego their Constitutionally-protected birthrights.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

New Jobs, New Opportunities in West Virginia

In all walks of life, people are trying to save money. That fact is just as true for companies as it is for families. Manufacturers are searching for new approaches to save costs. Families are looking for products that are more economical. One design approach promises benefits to both groups -- more durable, lighter-weight materials for manufacturers, and more economical, longer-lasting products for families.

That design approach is the use of composites. Composites blend raw materials and scientific applications to create entirely new materials to achieve a desired final product. Today, composites are breaking barriers in industries from aerospace to outer space to military supplies to the clothes that we wear.

Many West Virginia companies are stepping forward in this industry. In Harrison County, FMW Composite Systems produces airplane parts crucial to the next generation of fighter jets. FMW is the world's exclusive manufacturer of titanium matrix composite (TMC), a product that strengthens fighter aircraft while also reducing their weight. Lighter planes are more fuel efficient and more maneuverable. The Defense Department sees TMC as a key part for these top-of-the-line fighters.

Soon, FMW's work also will be part of the Space Shuttle. NASA is working to modernize the shuttles -- and turned to FMW for help. It took four years, but

FMW recently completed a Super Lightweight Integrated Carrier, built of the same composite used in the fighter plane. This new carrier shaves thousands of pounds off of the current design, helping NASA to increase shuttle payload capacity and improve each flight's productivity.

Another West Virginia company making great strides in composites is Touchstone Research Laboratory. The Ohio County company has patented several new composites, including its fiber-reinforced aluminum called MetPreg.

MetPreg can be used to build airplane fuel tanks; the skins of aircraft; lightweight structures for automotive, rail, and other transportation applications; crane booms; tennis rackets; golf club shafts; and bicycle frames. The same product that one uses to ride around the block can be part of the fighter jets patrolling a battlefield.

FMW and Touchstone are just two West Virginia success stories, and in the coming years, I expect more companies will join their ranks in the composites industry.

Combine this growth with other cutting-edge fields, like biometrics, software development, and defense manufacturing, along with a commitment to West Virginia's core industries of coal and energy, chemical production, and steel. The resulting economy will be much like a composite: stronger than its individual components and ready to meet the challenges ahead.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

First Steps Toward Better Mine Safety

It has been several weeks since we suffered a coal miner death in this country, but we must not grow complacent. The next accident could happen tomorrow. The 24 miner lives lost so far this year, 16 in West Virginia, have brought to light the urgent need for better rescue equipment and stronger safety enforcement. We know what needs to be done, and we must start doing it now. Every day of delay risks miners' lives.

In recent years, the federal coal enforcement budget has been tightly squeezed, resulting in gross incompetence at the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). We have seen the tragic consequences when the political leadership at MSHA forgets that its number-one job is protecting coal miners. Miners die when MSHA cuts its staff. Miners die when MSHA does not insist that 21st century rescue equipment is used in the mines.

Despite unprecedented national attention on mine safety, the budget that the President recently sent to Congress maintained the status quo. Four years of budget cuts and four years of coal enforcement staff cuts were left in place. That is unacceptable, and I am working to fix the President's broken budget.

Fortunately, the Senate

has taken the first step in the right direction. It has approved legislation that I wrote to add \$184 million to MSHA's budget during the next five years. The boost will allow MSHA to hire additional mine safety inspectors and implement better mine rescue technologies. These are common-sense changes that miners, and the families they work to support, deserve.

There are 217 fewer coal enforcement personnel on the MSHA payroll today than five years ago, yet the President's budget included no funding for additional inspectors. When West Virginia coal miners were killed at the Sago and Alma mines, the men's emergency communications and breathing equipment proved woefully inadequate, yet the budget contained severely insufficient funds for better rescue technology. My legislation would send more safety inspectors into the mines and place new rescue equipment into the hands of miners.

This is an important first step. It begins to fix the safety gaps in coal mining that we all know exist. MSHA has allowed safety enforcement to drag for years, and West Virginia has paid a terrible price. Enough is enough. It is time for the federal government to get serious about mine safety.

March 22, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

National Problems Find West Virginia Fixes

In the Senate, I'm in a unique position to learn about the problems facing the government's many federal agencies. For instance, it wasn't that long ago that the FBI watched as criminals, arrested in one place and wanted by police in another, were let loose because there was no way to check the suspect's fingerprints quickly. Prints were kept on individual cards that had to be searched one at a time. The FBI Complex at Clarksburg changed all that by digitizing fingerprints and storing them electronically. Today, after an investment of more than \$1 billion, these electronic fingerprints can be checked in a matter of moments, not days. The Harrison County complex has helped to revolutionize the nation's crime-fighting efforts.

The FBI is just one example of how, working with federal agencies, I've been able to identify national problems and help to find solutions in West Virginia.

Today, the Coast Guard has a similar problem. Its licensing and documentation procedures are fragmented and scattered around the country. There are gaps in our national security because the Coast Guard cannot process information as quickly and as thoroughly as it should. That problem also is finding a West Virginia solution.

I went to work with the Coast Guard on a new

National Maritime Center (NMC) to streamline the licensing and documentation practices, and to plug the holes in our nation's security. The Coast Guard has decided to build this new facility in the Eastern Panhandle, and a transitional office will open later this spring in Jefferson County.

It was not hard to show the Coast Guard the benefits of locating the NMC in the Mountain State. Already, the Coast Guard's two other facilities in the Eastern Panhandle have proved to be among the agency's most highly productive, efficient units. West Virginia benefits as well, with hundreds of jobs that add more than \$50 million each year to the local economy. The NMC, when fully up and running, will add another 250 good-paying jobs to the area.

The Coast Guard has proved what I have always believed: federal agencies can have their offices in Washington, but also get far more bang for their bucks by locating other key operations in West Virginia. I'm going to keep working to find West Virginia answers to national problems. We've shown that West Virginians can get the job done. We have the workforce. We have the infrastructure to support demanding high-tech projects. We have an excellent quality of life. Overall, there's no beating West Virginia.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Keeping the Promise to Coal Miners' Families

Next week, the miracle of the Sago mine explosion celebrates his 27th birthday. Randal McCloy, Jr., will be with his family, just weeks after he survived the Upshur County mine disaster that claimed the lives of 12 other men. The fact that Mr. McCloy will celebrate his birthday at home, surrounded by loved ones, is a remarkable testament to the dedication of his family, his doctors, his friends and fellow miners, and all of those in the community and state who have offered prayers and support.

All West Virginians wish Randal a happy birthday. We want him to recover fully from his experience and enjoy a long life with his family.

We still feel the pang of sadness that 16 other West Virginia miners will not have the same opportunity to celebrate birthdays with their families. The deaths of those men will remain in our hearts, and those coal mining families will remain in our prayers.

I have talked with many of those families. I have listened to their concerns. Their wish is that other coal mining families do not have to go through the pain of having loved ones killed on the job.

In the days since the recent West Virginia mine tragedies, I have pressed hard for the federal Mine

Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) to get its act together. For too long, MSHA has ignored my warnings that its lackadaisical attitude toward safety has jeopardized lives. No longer can MSHA close its ears to these fears. MSHA must know that the safety and health of coal miners are its paramount responsibilities.

This week, I won Senate Appropriations Committee approval for \$35.6 million for emergency mine safety measures. This funding would pay for more than 200 new safety inspectors. It would also help to spur the installation of advanced communications, rescue, and survival technologies in coal mines. Technologies exist that can help to save coal miners' lives after an explosion. But those technologies have not been put to use in most of America's coal mines. That has to change, and the funding in my legislation will help to get the job done.

The next step with this mine funding is to win the approval of the full Senate. The Senate is expected to debate this funding in the next few weeks, and I will continue to push for approval of my mine safety provisions. We face a safety crisis in the mines. Action is needed now to protect miners' lives.

April 5, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Real Steps Toward Port Security

This spring, when newspapers reported on White House plans to give control of six major U.S. seaports to a company owned and operated by the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the American people were dumbfounded. How could the United States allow a foreign country, which supported the Taliban and is linked to financing al Qaeda, to have an inside role in this country's port security? I am amazed that such a plan was rubber-stamped by the Bush Administration without so much as a raised eyebrow.

The debate about the UAE's operation of American ports sheds light on the fact that our port security efforts are paper-thin. Right now, inspectors check less than five percent of the more than 11 million shipping containers entering American ports -- less than five percent! Without urgent steps, America's seaports will remain prime targets for terrorists.

Last week, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved my proposal to invest \$648 million in port security initiatives. As a result, my port security funding package is now a part of an emergency national security appropriations bill, which includes money and resources for our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Our federal government must get serious about security here at home. We hear

great rhetoric about White House plans for homeland defense, but those plans are hollow. There is not enough money to back up the big talk.

My port security plan, unanimously approved by Republican and Democratic members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, would put the funding in place to inspect more of the cargo headed to the United States. We would be able to scan more containers for nuclear devices -- the so-called 'dirty bombs' that could kill hundreds of Americans. We would hire more inspectors and more security teams to ensure that shipments entering our ports are safe.

In this post-9/11 world, the Congress and the White House must put the safety of our citizens first. In order to stop potential terrorist plots and protect U.S. citizens, we must strengthen safeguards here at home. That means stronger port security and a commonsense policy governing the ownership and operations of our ports. That means more agents on our borders. That means giving our police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical teams the resources they need in order to respond to attacks. The White House's rhetoric about homeland security sounds good, but it is time to match those words with the financial resources to get the job done.

April 12, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Taking Steps to Stop Illegal Immigration

From the West Virginia hills to the halls of Congress, there is increased attention concerning illegal immigration. An estimated 11 million illegal immigrants are in the United States today, and the number continues to skyrocket. The immigration debate has raised serious questions about America's homeland security and economic future.

Without doubt, immigration has been important to America's greatness in the past as it will continue to be in the future. But, there is no excuse for turning a blind eye to the 500,000 aliens expected to sneak across the borders illegally this year. If we ever are to control illegal immigration, we have to start with tougher border security.

For more than four years, the nation has wondered how 19 terrorists managed to carry out the heinous September 11 attacks. Yet, today, America still remains dangerously exposed to terrorists who want to penetrate our borders. In fact, since September 2001, an estimated two million illegal immigrants have successfully evaded U.S. border security.

Such a dangerous situation must be turned around. That's why I wrote a new law last spring investing more than \$273 million in border security initiatives, including the hiring of 500 border patrol agents and more than 200 immigration enforcement agents and criminal investigators.

But that was just a first step. From morale problems to outdated technologies to a significant lack of manpower, border security efforts are inadequate and plagued by inefficiencies. To address those problems, I plan to offer a new funding proposal that will build on the success of last year's effort.

One proposal that I will not support is amnesty for illegal immigrants. Amnesties open routes to legal status for illegal aliens who want to circumvent vital security checks. Advocates may try to distance themselves from the word "amnesty," characterizing their proposals as "guest-worker" programs or "temporary visas," but the real effect of these amnesty proposals is to legalize the unlawful actions of millions of undocumented workers and the businesses that knowingly employ them.

The United States cannot afford to allow this huge stream of illegal immigration to continue. We also cannot afford to grant amnesty to millions of people who have broken our laws. Our country's resources -- our hospitals, schools, and social programs -- are stretched thin by this massive wave of illegal immigrants, and we are much more vulnerable to terrorists who want to slip past our lax security. It's time to toughen America's border security and invest in other steps necessary to curtail illegal immigration.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Turn the Tap on Clean Water

Modern technology surrounds us. Our computers speed information from one side of the world to the other in a split second. Nanotechnology, so small that it takes a microscope to see, is leading to amazing advances in medicine, manufacturing, high-performance materials, information technology, and energy and environmental technologies. The latest in composite materials are being used in all sorts of products, from more efficient cars and airplanes to the fabrics in our clothing. Today's dreams are rapidly becoming tomorrow's realities.

Unfortunately, with all of the progress in so many areas, one aspect of daily life remains stuck in the 20th century. Today, millions of Americans are forced to live with drinking water that is unhealthy and unsafe, filled with dangerous bacteria and so dirty that it turns a clear glass deep brown. There is absolutely no reason for people in this day and age to be forced to live with inadequate and dangerous water supplies.

That's why I have worked in the Senate to invest critical dollars toward the construction of modern water and sewer systems. These dollars, invested in facilities in West Virginia and across the country, are changing lives.

Just recently, I announced a major step forward for such a project

in Randolph County. The Upper Tygart River Watershed Project, in planning for nearly a decade, is finally moving toward construction. The dam and drinking water system will be built by Heeter, Inc., of Roane County. When it is finished, this project will help to bring clean drinking water to 21,500 Randolph County residents.

I am proud to be a partner in this watershed project. I worked in the Senate to provide \$23 million in federal funding for the work, with the remaining dollars coming from state and local sources.

While this is an important milestone, there remains much work ahead. The terrible truth is that, in our state and all across the country, the health of millions of men, women, and children is vulnerable because of contaminated water supplies.

Communities, especially those in rural areas, cannot possibly afford on their own to pay for the construction of safe drinking water systems. They should not have to. The federal government has a clear responsibility to provide support, both financial help and engineering assistance, to build safe and efficient water systems.

Clean water should not be a luxury afforded only to those living in wealthy communities; clean water is basic to the health and prosperity of all citizens.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Partnering for Better Health Care

Progress has been made across our state toward the goal of high-quality, affordable health care for all West Virginians, but much work remains. For every person who now has access to medical care close to home, there is another who still has to travel long distances to see a doctor. Whether it be emergency treatment for an illness or routine check-ups and screenings that help to maintain good health, proper medical care should not discriminate. All people, including those who live in small cities and rural areas, deserve the same access to doctors and nurses. That is my goal for West Virginia health care.

I have worked in the Senate to create and expand health care facilities throughout the state. I have joined with hospitals, universities, and private organizations to develop innovative solutions to West Virginia's health care challenges. I also have supported investments in the state's health care education programs. These efforts are training the next generation of health professionals, many of whom I hope will stay and practice their healing craft at home.

I recently participated in the dedication of one of the state's newest education facilities on the campus of City Hospital in Martinsburg. The new Health Professions Education Center is

part of the Eastern Division of the West Virginia University (WVU) Byrd Health Sciences Center. I secured \$6.5 million to construct the center, which will serve to improve health care services for residents of the Eastern Panhandle and help to address the shortage of physicians in the region.

WVU graciously chose to name the new education center after my dear wife. I am humbled by this gesture, and it is a tribute to the compassion that Erma showed toward everyone she met. I pray that the hands of the Great Physician will guide the doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and other health professionals who train at this facility and give healing to their patients for many years to come.

From one end of West Virginia to the other, our state's medical facilities are fast developing into some of the best in the country. Technology, training, and cutting-edge facilities are helping doctors to better treat patients' illnesses and to help West Virginians live longer, healthier lives. I hope that the Erma Byrd Health Professions Education Center can serve as a model for other collaborative efforts to improve health services across West Virginia. Together, we can work to ensure that all West Virginians get the care that they deserve.

May 3, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Guiding West Virginia's Graduates

As the warm breezes of spring spread through the hills of West Virginia, signs of new beginnings are all around. Flowers are blooming. Birds are chirping. Young people are graduating high school and college and embarking on new journeys. It is an exciting time indeed for these young adults, their families, and all West Virginians who are proud of their academic accomplishments.

I recently had the honor of delivering the commencement address at Marshall University's graduation of its largest class ever. It was a pleasure to see the pride and emotion in the faces of the graduates and their loved ones. The sky is the limit for what young West Virginians can accomplish in their lives. As thousands of young West Virginians all across our state graduate, I hope that they will never stop learning. Commencements are an important stepping stone along a life-long pursuit of knowledge. Some graduates will continue their formal education, but not all learning takes place in the classroom. People of all ages can continue to learn and thrive through reading, travel, and the study of history.

While the real world holds boundless promise

and opportunity for our young people, it also offers challenges. There will be rocky days and stormy nights, but all problems are made for solving. In His wisdom, Almighty God provided mankind with a brain and the will to use it. Perseverance is the key. In fact, it is the mark of a true West Virginian. All it takes is believing in oneself.

We can all be proud of our West Virginia heritage and the values we cherish. Honesty, hard work, love of country, family, and fellow man, and faith in God are time-tested West Virginia values and a key part of what makes our state unique.

As students from Marshall University and West Virginia's other colleges and universities start out on their life journeys, I urge them to forge their futures in West Virginia. We need their energy, their idealism, and their enthusiasm.

West Virginia will undoubtedly be a better place because of the active involvement of this spring's fresh crop of graduates. I commend them for their accomplishments, and I look forward to important contributions from them for our beloved state for years to come.

May 10, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Honoring Our Law Enforcement

It matters not the day or the hour. It matters not the weather or the circumstance. When our communities need them, we can rely on our law enforcement officers. Local police departments, county sheriffs and deputies, campus police, state troopers, federal agents, and the men and women in their ranks display great courage, always putting their lives on the line for the people of West Virginia.

Every May, we honor these law enforcement personnel for their dedication and, too often, unfortunately, for their sacrifices. Not far from the U.S. Capitol is the National Police Officers Memorial, where the names of those officers who have given their lives in the course of their duty are engraved in marble for all time. This year, the names of 466 officers were added to the memorial, 155 officers who were killed in the line of duty in 2005 and 311 officers from previous years. These are men and women who, through their lives and their deaths, exemplified selfless service and a desire to make our communities safer for all of us.

We hear a great deal about heroes these days. But, so many times, that moniker is associated with famous actors, athletes, or musicians. Not often enough, regrettably, are our

law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical teams, and other first responders called "heroes." Without a doubt, those who are willing to lay their lives on the line, track down criminals or jump into a burning building to defend the innocent and respond to any danger -- these people are true heroes.

All of us remember the selfless acts of New York's first responders on the morning of September 11, 2001. Knowing full well that their lives were in jeopardy, the police officers and firefighters never flinched. They went into those twin towers, climbed those stairs, and rushed people to safety, understanding that the buildings might collapse at any time. Until the last minute, they worked to save the lives of the people trapped at the World Trade Center. Their bravery will live on in our hearts forever.

Similarly, West Virginia's police officers and firefighters risk their lives each day. They are ready to do everything within their power to protect their fellow citizens. These men and women teach us lessons of dedication and courage, of community and character. I thank them for their commitment to our state, and I urge all West Virginians to do the same.

May 17, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Blessings of Marriage

In our society, the value of commitment seems to always shrink. Perhaps this trend is most disturbing when it comes to marriage. In America, more than 40 percent of all marriages end in divorce. For some people caught in abusive, destructive relationships, divorce may be the best option. However, as a person married for nearly 69 years, who pledged to endure hard times as well as revel in the good times, I can attest to the value of marriage.

The Book of Proverbs teaches, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord." Marriage -- a man and woman dedicating themselves to each other before Almighty God, and then together taking on whatever life throws at them -- is the most soul-fulfilling experience in this earthly world.

Marriage isn't easy. There are rocky days and tough times. But, it is well worth the effort, for what we give to our husband or wife comes back to us a hundred-fold, in love and support, in compassion, in understanding, and in personal growth.

My wife, Erma, proved that truth every day. Throughout our almost 69 years of marriage, she was our family's anchor. While I worked long hours

in the Senate, she raised our daughters into the fine mothers and grandmothers that they are today. When I had a tough day, Erma would find a way to pick me up. When I had success, Erma was there to make sure that I didn't get a big head and that I stayed humble and focused on the job ahead. Her earnest and dedicated support throughout a lifetime was one of God's richest blessings to me.

I cannot easily describe the love that Erma and I shared. But I can testify to the sanctity of marriage, and the sheer joy that comes with finding one's soul-mate and sharing that deep companionship during many happy years. I have had the unique opportunity to meet many great people -- kings, queens, presidents, and other celebrities. But visiting them never compared to the simple pleasure of coming home each night to Erma.

Marriage isn't like a new dress or suit. One doesn't change one's spouse just because times change. Marriage is a deep, lifelong bond. To bond with another soul in the commitment of marriage is the most satisfying experience that God can grant us in this life. I pray that more people in this country will experience the joys of marriage and that, for those who do, it is a lifelong commitment.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Moving Mine Safety Forward

Throughout the year, West Virginians have pressed for answers as to why 19 of our coal miners have been killed on the job this year. We all want to know what happened, why, and how we can prevent future tragedies.

While the investigations are continuing, there are certain facts that have come to light about these deadly incidents.

First, the oxygen that miners carry on their belts provides only about an hour of air. That's not enough to last until a rescue team arrives. Emergency supplies of oxygen should be stored inside the mines so trapped miners can survive until rescue teams arrive.

Second, there is no widely used technology to communicate with miners who are trapped underground. The technology exists, but not enough coal mines take advantage of it. There must be a mandate that communications technology be installed without delay.

Third, rescue teams, while incredibly brave, are not always familiar with a particular coal mine. In an emergency, those teams should know every turn and every tunnel of the mine involved. Time is a precious commodity during a rescue. A working knowledge of a mine where an explosion has occurred is vitally important to any rescue effort.

I am proud to report that the Senate has approved

legislation providing solutions to these widely accepted facts learned from this year's deadly mining incidents. The Senate legislation, called the MINER Act, will help to save lives and prevent future mine tragedies.

The MINER Act, which Senator Rockefeller and I helped to write, would require coal operators to submit plans detailing their mines' use of the most current communications, tracking, and breathing apparatus technologies. The Act would require coal mines to have continuously updated emergency response plans and two experienced rescue teams capable of a one-hour response time. The legislation toughens penalties for mine safety violations and gives the federal government the power to shut down a mine that fails to follow the safety laws.

The MINER Act is not the only step that Congress should take to improve mine safety, but it is a major step forward. This legislation would save more coal mining families the heartache of losing their loved ones in a mining disaster. We have a moral obligation to do everything we can to put an end to the safety crises in our nation's mines. The MINER Act is the best hope to begin fixing obvious problems that, if left unaddressed, would continue to cost lives.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Forward Thinking for National Disasters

Nearly a year has passed since Hurricane Katrina wrought massive destruction throughout the Gulf Coast region. The common refrain heard in the days after the disaster and throughout the months of rescue and recovery has been, "We weren't prepared." There is no mistaking that New Orleans, Louisiana, surrounding states, and the federal government were not prepared to handle an emergency of such magnitude, and millions of Americans have paid the price.

West Virginia knows all too well the damage that flood waters can do, but we don't give much thought to the impact that a different kind of emergency could have on our state. Since September 11, I have been concerned that if another terrorist attack were to strike Washington, D.C., it would be a flood of people, not water, that would rush into West Virginia.

Potentially millions of people could clog the highways leading into our state. They could turn to West Virginia communities for food and water, shelter, and medical services. The result might be a monumental challenge for West Virginia's infrastructure and emergency services. We need to plan now to be ready to handle such a challenge.

I am proud to report that West Virginia's preparations for such an emergency

situation have received a major boost. The state will receive nearly \$13.3 million in federal homeland security funds for this year. Of that total, more than \$7.5 million will support efforts to protect citizens in an emergency, including mass evacuation preparations. Another \$5.5 million will assist state and local law enforcement agencies to prevent and respond to potential acts of terrorism.

The West Virginia evacuation plans should include "preset" services and provisions that could help to speed people westward from the East Coast. Items like gasoline, medical supplies, beds, food, water, and other essential commodities would help facilitate a safer, more efficient evacuation.

Last fall, I authored a key provision of law that paved the way for states and local governments across the country to develop multi-state, multi-jurisdictional emergency evacuation plans. I have worked closely with Governor Joe Manchin and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in a combined mission to develop and strengthen West Virginia's mass evacuation plans.

In a post-September 11 world, we can hope for the best, but we must plan for the worst. By taking the right steps now, West Virginia will be ready to answer the call if disaster strikes.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Happy Birthday, West Virginia!

Certain momentous occasions are well-known simply by their place on the calendar. December 31, for example, is readily recognized as New Year's Eve, while January 1 is known to all as New Year's Day. July 4 is Independence Day. And, in the Mountain State, we all know one other calendar date: June 20, West Virginia Day!

West Virginia is a place of incredible natural beauty. When God created the Earth, He blessed West Virginia with an abundance of natural resources, unparalleled mountain views, cool green forests, sparkling lakes and rivers, and awe-inspiring geological wonders. No man-made park could ever compare with the natural glory so abundant in West Virginia.

But as beautiful as God's handiwork may be, it pales in comparison to the grace and the goodness that He has instilled in our people.

One does not define West Virginia by its boundaries on a map. West Virginia is defined by her people. West Virginians are unique, holding fast to our faith in God and love of country, our devotion to family and our caring for neighbors. Having grown up in the coalfields of West Virginia and devoted my public service to building a better

future for the families in our state, I am immensely proud of the people of West Virginia! We've been laughed at and called hillbillies. We've been ridiculed and lampooned. But, at each obstacle, the spirit of West Virginia shines through, and our people rise to the top.

In the coming years, there are many challenges awaiting us. We must continue to develop new jobs and new opportunities for our families. We must find new ways to bring doctors closer to their patients, so that people don't have to travel such long distances for basic medical care. Our classrooms must continue to improve -- a job that requires the efforts of our teachers, students, parents, and lawmakers alike. But problems are for solving. Working together, we can meet any challenge; we can overcome any obstacle.

As we celebrate West Virginia's 143rd birthday, we should pause to thank our Creator for His many blessings -- for the natural beauty around us and for the fellowship of our friends and neighbors. We should take pride in our heritage and embrace the opportunities ahead. Always keep in mind: "Montani semper liberi" -- Mountaineers are always free!

Happy birthday, West Virginia!

June 14, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

“In God We Trust”: A Motto For All Time

Money is an important part of our daily lives, but the bills and coins hold meaning beyond their monetary value. Each is inscribed with a simple, yet powerful, phrase that has helped to shape and guide the nation from its beginning. It is the national motto, “In God We Trust,” and it is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

The phrase began influencing national life long before its official adoption. The sentiment was central to the hopes and vision of the Founding Fathers. They relied on an abiding faith in the Creator for strength during the most difficult times in their struggle for freedom.

In the early days of the American Republic, while declaring independence from Great Britain, the Framers asserted: “We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The signers of the Declaration of Independence further declared: “And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

Francis Scott Key captured this same sentiment of reliance on Divine Providence in song in 1814. The original version of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” later adopted as the National Anthem, states: “Praise the Pow’r that hath made and preserv’d us as a nation! Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just, And this be our motto: ‘In God is our trust!’”

In 1955, the phrase was designated to be inscribed on all currency and coins of the United States, and, in 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a joint resolution of Congress declaring “In God We Trust” to be the nation’s official motto. It has played a fundamental role in America’s story since its designation.

As the only current Member of Congress who voted to establish our national motto, I was proud to introduce legislation in the Senate recently to commemorate the Golden Anniversary of “In God We Trust” and to reaffirm the motto’s place in our national life.

More than 50 years have passed since Congress officially endorsed the motto, but the words still ring as true today. Moral principles have shaped what America is today, and they should guide what America will be in the days and years to come.

June 21, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Bittersweet Victory for Mine Safety

In February, just a few weeks after the tragic events at the Sago mine in Upshur County and the Alma Aracoma mine in Logan County, the families of the men who lost their lives in those mines came to the U.S. Capitol. They carried a simple message with them: make our coal mines safer.

In the days since, the West Virginia Congressional Delegation has made that mission our top priority. We introduced legislation aimed at fixing the worst problems evidenced at Sago and Alma. Our bill targeted emergency oxygen supplies and communications, better trained rescue teams, a more rapid response, and tougher enforcement of the safety laws on the books.

That West Virginia bill, I am proud to report, served as the foundation for what is known as the MINER Act -- the first major mine safety legislation passed by the Congress and signed into law since 1977. This act, which Senator Rockefeller and I helped to write, passed the Senate unanimously and the House of Representatives with an overwhelming vote. The bottom line is that this new law will save lives. It will protect coal miners. It will mean tougher mine safety, better enforcement, and faster rescue in case

tragedy strikes.

I went to the White House to stand with President Bush as he signed the MINER Act into law. Families of our West Virginia coal miners also were there, holding pictures of their loved ones killed on the job. And Randal McCloy, Jr., was there with his wife, Anna. His ability to survive the Sago explosion, with the support of the men who were trapped underground with him, and his incredible journey toward recovery are an inspiration.

That trip to the White House was a bittersweet one. All of us were proud of the progress that this new law makes for mine safety, but saddened that it has taken the deaths of 19 of our coal miners to put these commonsense safety improvements into law.

The MINER Act is a good step forward for mine safety. But it is not the only step that we should take. Many new technologies and new safety ideas have been put into place in mining in Canada, Australia, and many other countries around the world. The United States Congress has clearly said that it is time for America to join the 21st century, and put the safety of our coal miners first and foremost.

June 28, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Vacationing Close to Home

As the calendar flips to July, many West Virginians are making plans for family summer vacations. Some may be foregoing faraway travel plans in the face of rising gas prices and costly airline tickets. I encourage all families to consider the many exciting destinations close to home.

Picturesque state parks saturate the West Virginia landscape. Visits to these natural treasures can give people of all ages a new appreciation for the beauty of our Mountain State. No artificial theme park could ever compare with the natural wonders so abundant in West Virginia.

What locals and visitors alike find when they visit our state parks is an array of breath-taking scenery, outdoor activities, stunning geological formations, and history. These parks offer some of the best, most family-friendly, recreational activities in the country complete with swimming, boating, and white-water rafting; horseback riding and golfing; camping, hiking, and biking.

West Virginia State Parks also offer educational opportunities. Many parks contain momentous historical sites that speak to the different stages in the development of America. These areas teach about colonial America, Revolutionary America, Civil

War America, and industrial America.

Our first President, George Washington, was one of many famous early Americans who made regular journeys to what is now Berkeley Springs State Park. They drank and bathed in the warm mineral waters that flow from the springs at a constant temperature of 74.3 degrees. Visitors can still see President Washington's personal outdoor bath tub. Perhaps the most important lesson children will learn at the state parks is that history is both alive and fascinating.

There is so much to see and do in West Virginia, and there is no better place to enjoy a summer vacation. Stay in a picturesque lodge or secluded cabin, or, even better, pitch a tent or haul a trailer into the parks' campgrounds. Set up camp and cook dinner over a Coleman stove. Go fishing in a nearby watering hole. Gather the family around the campfire at night to tell stories and roast marshmallows. Spread a sleeping bag and fall asleep under the stars while pondering the Almighty's infinite majesty, as you thank Him for creating such a magnificent place.

In just a few days at one of our state parks, families can accumulate a lifetime of memories and learn why West Virginia really is "Almost Heaven!"

July 5, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protect Chemical Facilities, Local Communities

Chemical plants and distribution facilities dot West Virginia. Throughout the state, there are 73 chemical manufacturing plants and 100 chemical distribution plants. Many are built along the banks of the Kanawha and Ohio rivers. It does not take great imagination to determine that these facilities are potential targets for terrorist attack. Such an attack could lead to devastating loss of human life and damage to the local and national economies. The same can be said for facilities in New Jersey, New York, Texas, Michigan, California, Pennsylvania, and many other states.

That is why it is so important that we protect these key facilities and the communities that surround them.

Unfortunately, the federal Department of Homeland Security has let chemical plant protections slide to the back burner.

Last year, at my request, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) took a hard look at chemical plant safeguards, and concluded that, for 93 percent of the chemical industry, it is uncertain whether facilities are improving security at all. Only 1,100 of the 15,000 chemical facilities in the country are known to adhere to voluntary industry security procedures.

The Environmental Protection Agency reports that 123 chemical plants

located throughout the nation could each potentially expose more than a million people if a chemical release occurred.

We cannot ignore these facts and simply hope that nothing bad will happen. We have to take action.

I'm proud to report that the Senate has approved a proposal that I authored to spur community and chemical plant protections. My proposal instructs the Department of Homeland Security to work directly with chemical companies on ways to ensure that their facilities are better protected from potential terrorist attack.

More than three years ago, the GAO urged the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to develop a comprehensive strategy for protecting chemical plants. Yet, that strategy remains unfinished. My amendment would require the Department of Homeland Security to get to work to protect these vulnerable sites.

All of us hope that an attack against a chemical plant will never happen. But hope alone won't prevent disaster. We must take steps now to tighten security in the chemical industry and to protect the lives of the people living in the communities near our plants. Anything less would jeopardize millions of lives and place our state and our country at risk.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Visit the West Virginia State Fair!

There is nothing like the State Fair at Lewisburg. Each year, the communities of West Virginia meet at the fairgrounds in Greenbrier County for a celebration of our heritage and look with hope toward the future, for contests and music, for food and friends. This year's State Fair -- the 82nd in West Virginia history -- will run from August 11 through August 20. The fairground gates open at 8 a.m. each day, with activities and exhibits happening all day long and far into the evening.

I have always enjoyed the State Fair. In fact, this year, I plan to be there for the Fair's Opening Day. I hope that visitors to the Fair will stop by and say hello. Members of my staff will have a booth set up on Friday, August 11, and Saturday, August 12. They will be on hand to say hello and listen to concerns that people may have about the federal government. This is the latest stop in our Mobile Office operation, an operation that has had members of my staff traveling hundreds of miles each year to visit communities throughout the state. This outreach is a key part of my efforts to respond to the needs of West Virginians. After all, I have

no more important role as a United States Senator than standing up for the people whom I represent.

I like to try to cut through red tape and help West Virginians with problems or concerns that they may have about the federal government. By bringing my staff to the local community, I hope that we can answer questions and provide the assistance that people need. Whether at the State Fair in August or on another stop throughout the state, the Byrd Mobile Office team is ready to lend a hand.

To learn more about the services that I offer through my federal office, I urge that people visit my website at <http://byrd.senate.gov>. To learn more about the State Fair's daily schedule, accommodations, directions, and entertainment, check out the Fair's website at <http://www.wvstatefair.com>.

I hope that West Virginians will enjoy this year's State Fair at Lewisburg. It is a wonderful time to spend with family and friends. And plan to visit my Mobile Office, whether at the Fair or when we make a stop near your hometown. I look forward to hearing from you.

July 19, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Use Our History to Build Our Future

West Virginia has helped to shape America's history. George Washington and some of our nation's Founding Fathers once lived in what is today our Eastern Panhandle. Lewis and Clark stopped in Wellsburg, Wheeling, Parkersburg, and Belleville preparing for their 1803 expedition to find a water route from the east to the Pacific Ocean. Barbour County was home to the Civil War's first land battle. Harpers Ferry was pivotal to the end of slavery. The list of historical events which occurred in our state could stretch for many pages.

Today, many communities throughout the state recognize that our past can play a central role in our future. Recently, I had the opportunity to visit one such effort -- a historical restoration project in Berkeley County.

A few years ago, local residents banded together to rehabilitate the Martinsburg Roundhouse. The Roundhouse gained national significance as the scene of the first U.S. labor strike and a target of a six-week-long siege by Confederate troops, led by "Stonewall" Jackson. Because of the importance of the railroad to supplying troops, Martinsburg and the Roundhouse were prime targets for both Union and Confederate forces, with control of the city passing back and forth between the two more than 50 times. The Roundhouse remained in use until 1988, when it finally felt the inevitable

winds of change and its operations were transferred elsewhere.

But community members believed that this piece of yesterday could be a key piece of tomorrow. They went to work to restore this facility and, through their passion and perseverance, the rail station has been transformed into a centerpiece for community gatherings, tourism, and economic development.

I am proud to have helped the Roundhouse effort, just as I have helped many other similar projects throughout West Virginia, by obtaining nearly \$3.7 million in federal funds for its restoration. Those federal dollars helped to attract millions of additional dollars from a variety of sources. As a result, what once was a crumbling relic now has a bright, promising future.

A statue near the National Archives in Washington, D.C., carries the inscription, "Past is prologue." West Virginians, as we celebrate our glorious heritage, must also recommit our wholehearted strength and vision to the future of the state.

Like the residents of Martinsburg, we must embrace history and use it as our sword and shield to build community spirit, promote tourism, and encourage investments in new businesses. The lesson is simple: By heralding our past, a united West Virginia can build a brighter tomorrow.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

WV Guard: Always at the Ready

It is no secret that the West Virginia National Guard is one of the best trained, most highly respected units in the country. These brave men and women make West Virginia proud in their service at home and abroad. They fly across the globe, serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, in Bosnia and Kosovo, in Panama, and at the U.S./Mexico border. They also save lives at home, battling floods, blizzards, and storms in communities across the state.

This exemplary record of service comes at a time when the nation's Army National Guard is in a dire readiness situation. Media reports state that more than two-thirds of the Army Guard's brigades throughout the country are not combat ready. The problems are largely caused by equipment shortfalls when units return from war and by delays in training new Guardsmen.

According to West Virginia's Adjutant General Allen Tackett, the Mountain State's Army Guard is at a readiness level that is 20 percent above the national average. West Virginia's units were among the first to deploy when the Iraq operation began, and they have successfully reconstituted units as they return. All the while, they are the first to respond when emergencies strike at home. No matter

the challenge, the West Virginia Guard is always ready to answer the call.

I have worked in the Senate to make sure that the West Virginia National Guard has the tools and training it needs to carry out its mission -- wherever that mission may be.

Later this month, we will dedicate the new Williamstown Army National Guard Readiness Center. The more than 40,000 square-foot facility replaced an outdated and undersized center and currently supports 28 full-time and 243 drilling Guard members. The center will enhance the West Virginia Guard's aviation training. Since 1999, I have been actively involved in helping the Williamstown center to secure a new fleet of five Blackhawk air ambulance helicopters.

These aircraft are specifically designed for emergency medical evacuations and are capable of transporting six acute care patients at one time. They are greatly improving the West Virginia Guard's ability to respond to state emergencies and to serve the national needs of the active Army.

I applaud the West Virginia National Guard for its unceasing commitment to our state and our country. They have always stood by us, and I will always stand by them.

August 2, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Building Tomorrow's Jobs Today

West Virginia's economy has long been based in strong core industries -- industries like coal, steel, timber, and chemicals. I have worked hard to expand the opportunities for these industries, opening new doors for West Virginia products and standing up for the men and women who earn their living by the sweat of their brow. These industries employ tens of thousands of West Virginians and are central to the future of our state.

But none of us should ever be satisfied with "good enough." I believe that, in this global marketplace, West Virginia must have an innovative economy, one that relies on brain power as much as muscle. West Virginia, like the rest of the country, must adapt to the changing realities of the global marketplace and respond with creative approaches to job creation and growth.

Through my work for West Virginia in the Senate, I have planted the seeds of this innovation economy throughout the state. High-tech initiatives underway in Summers County are prime examples of this effort. Partnering with local officials and Congressman Nick Rahall, I worked to obtain \$3.6 million in federal funds, matched by state funding, to construct a new four-story, 72,000 square-foot high-tech office building. The new facility will

serve as a unique jobs engine, helping to grow the city's workforce and provide an economic shot in the arm for the entire region.

Already, high-tech companies are taking note of these efforts. A pair of companies -- ManTech Corporation and Information Manufacturing Corporation -- have recognized that West Virginia's mountains can be traversed with fiberoptic lines, and West Virginia's people are ready to take on the challenges of the new economy. These two companies are putting West Virginians to work, and their success can provide the blueprint for other high-tech companies looking to compete in the Mountain State.

I recently dedicated this new high-tech facility with Summers County residents. We have a great deal to celebrate -- a proud heritage and a bright future.

From powering the country's economy with clean-burning Mountain State coal, to advances in medicine, to new manufacturing techniques, to breakthrough computer technologies, the nation is in the midst of a technological revolution, and West Virginia is helping to shape it. The foundations that we build and the opportunities that we create certainly will provide benefits for us today. At the same time, these foundations will help to develop new industries and new jobs for many decades to come.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Turning Point in History

A century ago, a group of men and women gathered at Storer College in Harpers Ferry for the first meeting in America of the Niagara Movement. These courageous individuals were looking for ways to advance civil rights in the United States. They organized, against all odds, determined to change America.

Their meeting in Jefferson County in 1906 was a catalyst for progress in the United States -- progress that continues to this day. Storer College is now part of the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Thousands of people are visiting the park for the Niagara Movement's centennial celebration.

From the Niagara Movement emerged the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which has been at the forefront of defending and supporting the causes and interests of African-Americans and others in their pursuit of equal protection under the law.

I look forward to the Niagara Movement's celebration at Harpers Ferry. I have worked with the leadership of the West Virginia NAACP and the Jefferson County NAACP to help

make this event a great success. I am proud to report that I was able to obtain \$300,000 to help fund the centennial celebration.

The courageous and determined men and women of the Niagara Movement made claim to their birthright as citizens of this country, and reminded the nation of their right to full citizenship as outlined in the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the Constitution.

That commitment and determination are a testament to what a few individuals motivated by passion and faith can achieve. Mountains can be moved. Prejudice can be overcome, and the course of history can be changed.

Much progress has been made since the time of the Niagara Movement, but the journey must continue. The celebration at Harpers Ferry reminds us all of the brave struggle of many souls moved and inspired by the dream of freedom and justice for all. As we pay tribute to the resolute members of the Niagara Movement, let us remember the statement issued at the conclusion of the conference: "The battle we wage is not for ourselves alone, but for all true Americans."

August 16, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A New Way to Save for College

In West Virginia, education -- particularly a college education -- is the passport to progress. But the rising cost of college tuition is making this important stepping stone harder for working families to afford. The average cost of attending a four-year college, including tuition and room and board, has increased more than 500 percent in the last 30 years. Fortunately, there is a program available to help parents save for their children's education.

The West Virginia SMART 529 college savings plan allows individuals to open college savings accounts with as little as \$100. These investments grow free of federal tax and can be withdrawn tax-free, as long as the dollars are used for education purposes. This tax-free saving will help families to put away more money for college and to build a brighter future for their children.

The state program already has more than 76,000 accounts with a value of more than \$775 million. That is a major down payment for the future of these young West Virginians. In today's global economy and competitive job market, education is a major asset for a person starting a

business or looking for a job. By helping families to begin saving for college early, and not taxing the investments, the federal government can help to open the door to a college degree for tens of thousands more students.

I am proud to have co-sponsored legislation that provides federal tax benefits for families who use these college savings accounts. That legislation served as the foundation for a new law, extending the federal tax benefits for families who use these college savings accounts. As a result, more West Virginia families will be able to benefit from these college savings plans.

I could not afford to attend a four-year college. My college education is a patchwork of classes that I pieced together by taking courses at various schools in the state. I know attending college can be costly and difficult. I know it is a hardship and a sacrifice for students and parents. But it is so important. The time I devoted to my education changed my life.

It is my hope that the legislation I cosponsored will make it a little bit easier for West Virginians saving for college to achieve their dreams.

August 23, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Today's Science Is Tomorrow's Opportunity

The economy of our world, our country, and our state is changing. Science and technology are playing leading roles in the new global marketplace. A race is underway to see who will make the discoveries of the future and who will watch from the sidelines. One thing is for sure: West Virginia has joined the race -- and we have what it takes to win.

Many years ago, I saw the changes on the horizon and began to plan for West Virginia's role in the new economy. I threw my energies into building the critical infrastructure that is needed to support our state's traditional industries while also harnessing the emerging industries of the future. One such project at Marshall University has grown from a seedling idea to a state-of-the-art facility that will open its doors in coming days.

The new 144,000 square-foot Biotechnology Science Center is the largest capital improvement project in Marshall University's history. The innovative facility represents limitless possibilities for scientific research and economic development in the state. The discoveries that will be made by the scientists, researchers, doctors, and students at Marshall will advance science beyond the power of our imaginations and will create one of the future economic pillars of the Mountain State and the

nation.

The effort to construct a cutting-edge science facility and create a stronger foundation for a biotech industry in West Virginia began when former Marshall University President Wade Gilley visited my office in 1999. We talked about the potential for biotechnology in Marshall's future. After our meeting, I rolled up my sleeves to do the work in Congress to secure federal funding to help turn Marshall's dreams into reality. It was a real partnership for progress, and I was pleased to dedicate the new building recently with Marshall students, faculty, and community leaders.

We have the talent right here in West Virginia to take advantage of the biotechnology wave. The state's colleges and universities, strengthened by the efforts at Marshall, are producing more graduates with greater skills in various scientific fields. We all share a goal to provide educational opportunities that will allow graduates to find good paying jobs in West Virginia, rather than having to look out of state.

The new biotechnology center will open exciting doors to educational advancements and economic growth for our state for years to come. I will continue to work every day on initiatives that build for the future of West Virginia and create new opportunities for our people.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

One Lesson of a Tragic Anniversary

Five years ago, on September 11, the sun was shining in New York City and over the Pentagon. People were going about their day, not knowing that, in a matter of minutes, thousands of lives would be lost and our country would be changed forever.

That day, more than any other, reinforced in our minds the bravery of our first responders. That morning crystallized for us the quiet courage of our emergency personnel. These men and women are always ready to place their lives on the line. They hold constant watch over us, always ready to respond.

Amazingly, too many people in Washington have not learned a key lesson of 9-11: We must give our first responders the tools and money they need to do their jobs. But instead of making sure that our police officers and firefighters receive the training and equipment that they need, the White House has put forward budget after budget that shortchanges our emergency response teams.

The President, in his latest budget plan, proposed to cut firefighter equipment and training grants by 46 percent and to eliminate the program to hire more firefighters. He also wanted to cut grants to state and local law enforcement by more than \$1 billion. Neither

cut made sense to me, and I went to work to make sure that our emergency response teams did not feel the pain of the budget axe. I am proud to report that we were able to defeat every dollar in firefighter and law enforcement cuts that the White House proposed.

I will continue my efforts for our police officers and firefighters. Just last year, I worked to provide more than \$10 million for West Virginia's local law enforcement and emergency response teams. Those dollars are at work today, protecting communities and saving lives.

America cannot afford to shortchange our communities' safety. The lives of thousands more people could be placed in jeopardy with another terrorist attack or natural disaster. The Congress and the White House share a responsibility to invest in our police departments and fire departments and rescue teams and hospitals. Without that critical network in place, trained and equipped, any disaster could be magnified with confusion, chaos, and an even greater loss of life.

I will continue to do all that I can to invest in our community protections. Our police officers, firefighters, and rescue squads have always stood for us, and I will always stand for them.

September 6, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Meeting the Needs of Injured U.S. Troops

For many of the troops who serve in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, their sacrifices do not end with their deployments. Those who are injured in battle often return home in need of specialized medical care. Their recoveries are many times long, difficult, and have lasting effects on the victims and their families. These brave men and women risk their lives for their country, and we owe them nothing short of the best medical care available.

The weapons of choice in today's wars have changed and so have the injuries. Our forces serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are under attack by grenades, bombs, land mines, and artillery shells. These explosive devices have made brain injuries the "signature wound" of the war in Iraq, and the health care we provide to returning troops must adapt.

That is why I have championed funding in the Senate for the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. The center provides medical evaluation, treatment, and long-term care for active duty military members, their dependents, and veterans with traumatic brain injuries.

The DVBIC estimates that approximately one in ten service members in Iraq,

and two in ten troops on the front lines, return from combat tours with concussions. As of March 31, 2006, the Pentagon reported about 1,200 traumatic brain injuries as a result of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Experts say the real total is much higher because internal head injuries -- in which there may be no obvious wound -- often go undiagnosed.

The DVBIC's leaders asked Congress for additional funding for the coming year, due to the growing number of patients with brain injuries, the cost of long-term care, and the need for research to improve treatment and prevention. Yet, the center was at risk of having its budget cut by 50 percent.

The facility is critically important for rehabilitating injured servicemembers, and I could not let its funding languish. I went to work on legislation that would fully fund the DVBIC for the coming year. The funds were recently approved by the Senate and are now one step closer to becoming law.

America's fighting forces put their lives on the line when they report for duty. They have earned the respect of their nation as well as access to high-quality medical care for as long as they need it. I will continue to work to ensure that our troops receive nothing less.

September 13, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Marking the Lessons of Constitution Day

Our Constitution is the foundation of our freedoms. Just a few pages, written on parchment, established for all time the direction and structure of these United States. The first ten amendments, known as the Bill of Rights, guarantee our freedoms: freedom of speech; freedom of religion; the right to assemble; the right to petition the government; the right to bear arms; and the right to vote. Our liberties are protected by that Constitution, not only by the Bill of Rights but also by the separation of powers and the checks and balances among the three equal branches of our government.

But a great Republic cannot sustain itself unless its citizens participate actively in their own government. To do that our citizens must be familiar with the Constitution and the intent of the Framers who wrote it. That is why, two years ago, I included a provision in U.S. law which designates September 17 of each year as Constitution Day, so that, on or near this day, all Americans can learn more about the Constitution and reflect upon its importance. Once again this year,

schools in West Virginia and throughout our country offered special Constitution Day programs. And citizens from all walks of life stopped to think about the role of the Constitution in their daily lives.

Each of us should give thanks that on September 17, 1787, our forefathers signed their names to the new Constitution and launched mankind's most remarkable experiment in self-governance.

Constitution Day should remind us all that we the people are the ultimate guardians of our freedoms.

Unless we understand our birthright and guard it vigorously, we risk losing the gift of the Framers. Our Constitution continues to inspire millions around the globe. It has survived the stresses and strains of 219 years of incredible challenge and change.

Our Constitution's Framers were willing to risk everything they owned, even their own lives, to give us the great treasure that is our nation and our form of government. Each of us has an obligation to hand that treasure on to future generations intact and strong and secure.

September 20, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Voluntary School Prayer Gaining Ground

Earlier this year, I introduced a Constitutional amendment to clear the way for voluntary prayer in schools. I am proud to report that my effort is gaining the support of a growing number of Senators, including key members of the Senate Republican Leadership team.

My efforts on school prayer go back many years. Like most West Virginians, I think that court decisions have gone way too far when they have acted to prevent any sort of religious expression in public settings. Prayer and faith in the Creator have helped to shape this nation from its earliest days. Our Founding Fathers relied on the Creator's strength to carry them through the most difficult hours in the battle for independence. But despite the clear role of prayer and faith in our nation, too many courts have tried to gag citizens who want to voluntarily express their beliefs.

In ruling after ruling, the courts have been moving perilously close to prohibiting the free exercise of religion in America. Americans do not want to force religion on anyone. But neither do we want religious censorship. Ours is a religious nation, and we have been so throughout our history.

That is why I am urging the Congress to approve my Constitutional amendment to allow voluntary school

prayer. The First Amendment to the Constitution states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; ..." I believe that court rulings have been significantly one sided -- with far more weight being given to the first part of that clause ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion") than to the second part ("or prohibiting the free exercise thereof").

A growing number of Senators have signed up to support my proposal. My West Virginia colleague in the Senate, Jay Rockefeller, is a cosponsor of the amendment. Other Senators, including Thad Cochran and Trent Lott, both of Mississippi, Saxby Chambliss of Georgia, James Inhofe of Oklahoma, and Elizabeth Dole of North Carolina are also working with me to win Senate approval of this initiative.

Faith has long been a guiding principle in our country and, we need to remember its role in our history and development. In the coming weeks, I hope that more Senators will join me in my effort to restore a voluntary recognition of a higher power to the daily lives of our children, and that this effort will begin to restore some balance to the role of faith in our nation's public life.

September 27, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Standing Strong for Social Security

In 1935, when President Franklin Roosevelt signed the law creating the Social Security system, he stated that Social Security would "give some measure of protection to the average citizen and to his family against the loss of a job and against poverty-ridden old age." For more than 70 years, Social Security has been the ultimate financial protection for the American people. But now, there is another threat to the long-term strength of the traditional Social Security program.

Earlier this year, the White House included a proposal in its budget to divert \$700 billion in Social Security funds for the President's scheme. That plan was met with widespread opposition by the American people. Unfortunately, the White House is not listening to the people. In recent speeches and news interviews, President Bush revealed his plan to take another run at privatizing Social Security -- but not until after the November elections. The White House seems committed to gambling Social Security protection for our elderly on the whims of Wall Street.

Let me be clear: I will fight to protect Social Security and not allow it to be jeopardized on some risky privatization scheme. There is little good that can come from placing our seniors'

Social Security benefits at the mercy of the stock market. Social Security should not become some Wall Street baron's play thing. We have to work to strengthen Social Security for this generation and generations to come, and not place that safety net at risk.

Recently, with Senator Rockefeller, I signed the "Golden Promise" petition -- a pledge to fight to protect Social Security and not risk it with dangerous, politically motivated schemes. Hundreds of people gathered at the Capitol to launch the petition drive, all of us committed to the effort to protect Social Security. To join the effort and sign the petition, visit www.americansunitedforchange.org.

More than 400,000 West Virginians rely on the Social Security program for assistance. For many of these people, Social Security is their sole source of income. That is why we cannot allow Social Security to be jeopardized. The stakes are simply too high for this White House gamble.

Social Security is a gift from the World War II Generation to this and every coming generation. It was forged from their suffering and resiliency during the Great Depression, and the task now falls to us to preserve that gift for generations to come.

October 4, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Good News in the Fight Against Cancer

Each October, the nation marks Breast Cancer Awareness Month -- a time to take note of our progress in the fight against cancer and to celebrate the progress that we are making together.

Rest assured, there is progress to celebrate. Just last month, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) announced that, overall, cancer mortality in West Virginia is declining faster than the national average. That's the good news. But the bad news is that the Mountain State's cancer rate still exceeds the U.S. average.

In West Virginia, according to the recent NCI data, cancer deaths dropped 1.5 percent per year from 1999-2003, the latest five-year period for which full data are available. It's a small drop, but an important one. That drop represents lives which have been saved.

While this is good news, we still have considerable work ahead. The NCI reported that approximately 4,700 Mountain State residents continue to lose their battles against cancer each year. Detailed statistical information on cancer across the country and in West Virginia -- including information about each of our 55 counties -- is available online at <http://www.state-cancerprofiles.cancer.gov>.

Throughout the state,

experts are working to raise people's awareness to the warning signs of cancer and to prevent the illness from ever striking. The more that people know and the better the information that is in their hands, the more effective the prevention will be.

One of our state's best anti-cancer efforts is the work at West Virginia University's Mary Babb Randolph Cancer Center, attacking the disease on all fronts: treating cancer patients with cutting-edge, comprehensive care; finding new cancer cases in their early, treatable forms; and researching a cancer cure. One of the key priorities at the cancer center is its broad-based research program in breast cancer. The WVU center is making an impact statewide in cancer detection and prevention and in helping to save lives.

Cancer is a devastating disease that has touched the lives of nearly every West Virginian. The good news is that West Virginia's cancer rate is falling. But we cannot stop with just this sign of progress. As individuals, we must live healthier lives and make preventive care a top priority. As a state and a nation, we must continue to invest in life-saving research. We can find the cures to these diseases, and the answers may be found right here in West Virginia.

October 11, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Stopping Domestic Violence Before it Strikes

This fall, news reports have carried the stories of too many families in West Virginia suffering terrible incidents of domestic violence. Ironically, October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. A spate of recent beatings and murder-suicides has made us painfully aware of the devastation that results when family members turn against one another in anger.

Domestic violence is a scourge we cannot ignore. It is reprehensible in every respect, and we must do all that we can to stop it. Since September, horrific incidents of domestic violence have occurred in Berkeley, Cabell, Kanawha, Putnam, and Jefferson counties. By mid-October, the third murder-suicide in two months was reported in the Eastern Panhandle.

These tragic events have resulted in lost lives, shattered families, and anguish for all involved. They serve as painful reminders that the consequences of domestic violence are devastating, not only for the adults who are killed or injured, but also for the children who witness them.

We must do more to stop domestic violence before it happens. I cosponsored legislation to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which was signed into law early this year. Despite this success, the Administration's budget for next year cuts millions from federal efforts to enforce domestic

violence laws.

There is no conscientious reason to support cuts that place lives at risk. On the Appropriations Committee, I worked with Democratic and Republican Senators to reject those budget cuts and provide an additional \$43 million for family protection initiatives in West Virginia and across the country. I hope that the entire Senate soon will approve our effort, because victims of domestic violence should not also be the victims of ill-conceived budget cuts.

We must all work harder to anticipate and halt domestic violence. If you or anyone you know fears imminent harm, call the local police or 911. To try and prevent a violent incident, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE, 24 hours-a-day. Or telephone the statewide office of the West Virginia Domestic Violence Coalition at 304-965-3552. Calling ensures safety, since all information sent over the Internet -- including e-mail -- can be intercepted by third parties. To obtain contact information for local domestic violence programs, visit www.wvcadv.org/member_programs.htm.

Every few seconds, another woman in America is battered, usually by a boyfriend or husband. Spousal crime is one of the most unreported crimes in the country. We cannot simply hope that it will end. We must take action.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Progress to Report on Corridor H

The paths through West Virginia's Potomac Highlands are, too often, a dangerous maze of two-lane roads, winding dizzily around the region's mountains. As a result, job opportunities have been slow to find the region while traffic accidents and deaths are far too common. That's why completing Corridor H will make such a difference in people's lives.

Already, in the sections of Corridor H that are open to traffic, cars and trucks are able to navigate the mountains more safely and more quickly. Fatalities are down and opportunities are growing. But the promise of Corridor H is still elusive for the people who have been waiting and waiting for the road to be built.

The legal hurdles to the remaining sections of Corridor H have largely been overcome. Now, the focus turns to funding. It's no secret that building a mile of highway in West Virginia is far more expensive than building that same mile in flat states like Kansas or Iowa. Projects like Corridor H are incredibly expensive, and acquiring the funds takes time.

I am proud to report that, already, I have won Congressional approval for

more than \$656 million for Corridor H design and construction -- and more dollars are on the way. Last summer, Senator Rockefeller and I partnered on federal legislation to ensure that West Virginia would receive \$432.5 million in Corridor highway construction funds. And, when the Senate returns to work in November, I shall press for the approval of separate legislation that would direct another \$20 million toward Corridor H, as well as other construction dollars to key highway projects throughout West Virginia.

Those dollars are translating into real progress. This summer, construction began on the very first segment of Corridor H in Grant County, as crews started work on a section of highway that will stretch from Moorefield to Forman. That's solid progress, and more work is on the way.

More than 40 years ago, in 1965, Congress promised the people of Appalachia that it would build a network of roads to link the region to interstate highways and bring economic opportunities into the hills and hollows. That is a promise that needs to be kept. It is time to finish Corridor H.

October 25, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

FBI Mission Growing in WV

Since the FBI opened in Harrison County in 1999, the facility's mission has grown and adapted as crime-fighting priorities have changed. West Virginians are proud of the Clarksburg complex and its evolving role in national law enforcement efforts. The agency's Mountain State presence is helping to identify criminals and terrorists alike and to ensure the safety of all Americans.

When the Senate gets back to work after the November election, I will push for more than \$449 million in funds for the FBI in Harrison County. That is a \$50 million boost over the facility's current funding -- an increase that will help the agency continue to expand its mission.

We all know that the Clarksburg FBI complex is a key tool in keeping criminals off the streets. The facility provides critical support for state and local law enforcement agencies, helping them to identify suspected criminals and analyze evidence in crime scene investigations. But perhaps not as well known is the fact that the facility also plays a growing role in America's counterterrorism efforts.

The fingerprint database in Clarksburg includes information on some 40,000 known or suspected terrorists as part of approximately 47 million sets of finger-

prints and corresponding criminal history information stored electronically at the site. Since the FBI fingerprint system became operational in Clarksburg, more than 130 million fingerprint submissions have been processed.

The FBI funding that I will push in coming months will allow the agency to keep ahead of the complex network of criminal and terrorist activities. These dangerous individuals continually change their tactics, and the country's defenses must always be ready to adapt. This new funding builds on the more than \$1 billion that I have obtained for the Harrison County FBI's computer and high-tech infrastructure.

The Clarksburg FBI complex is a prime example of Mountain State resources and top-notch manpower helping to meet national security and law enforcement challenges. More than 2,500 federal employees work at the Clarksburg FBI Complex, with another 1,000 contract personnel in West Virginia having jobs linked to the facility.

These men and women work each day to make the country safer. West Virginians should take great pride in the fact that our state is home to a world-class initiative that is helping the entire nation to realize a better, safer quality of life.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Ensuring Quality Care for Our Veterans

West Virginia's veterans have served in missions around the globe. Their bravery and courage have helped to keep our nation safe and strong. The gratitude that we express to our veterans sends a message to future generations of fighting men and women, as well as to our current veterans, and to the families of the fallen.

That is why I am honored, this Veterans Day, to participate in the dedication of the new West Virginia Veterans Nursing Home in Clarksburg. This \$26 million facility will provide long-term medical treatment for veterans from across the state and ensure that these men and women do not have to travel long distances, perhaps even out of state, for their care.

While this nursing facility will assist some of West Virginia's older veterans, we also must focus on providing the care that our new veterans require. Each day, as they come home from war, many of our new veterans have specialized medical needs.

Some of the most serious injuries facing these new veterans are those that cannot be seen from the outside. In fact, brain injuries have been called "the signature wound" of the Iraq war. Yet, the Defense Department's premier brain

trauma center faces funding cuts that jeopardize treatment of brain injuries for our troops.

I am not going to stand by and see these services placed at risk. I pressed the Senate to approve legislation so that these very challenging, very intricate injuries will receive the attention of experienced doctors and nurses. The Senate responded, directing \$19 million to the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

The nature of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, where roadside bombs are as prevalent as bullets, means that the medical care we provide must adapt to these new conditions. This funding will help to meet the need for better research and treatment of brain injuries.

This Veterans Day, and each day, we should take the time to say "thank you" to our veterans for putting their lives on the line for our freedom. To anyone willing to serve this country in the Armed Services, everlasting gratitude is theirs by right. In the Senate, I will continue to work for our veterans and for our troops in the field. These men and women did not flinch when called to duty, and we must never flinch from our support of them.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Leading America

On Election Day, the American public issued a strong message that they desire positive change. Partisans of either political party -- Republican or Democrat -- would do well to consider that message carefully.

A strong America does not require political party dominance. The foundation of our country's strength is not intemperate rhetoric or skillful opportunism.

I believe the message of this election is that "We the People" desire a return to many of the traditional values that have made our country great. The American people yearn for public servants with sober clarity of purpose.

The core of my political philosophy has always been to work hard, be honest, and fight for West Virginia's interests. It is a simple prescription, but it works.

In this recent election, the voting public felt that many basic principals had not been upheld by Congress.

Some voters questioned the responsibility of allowing an exploding deficit to add \$1.5 trillion to our national debt.

Many Americans were motivated by concern for an elective war that is costing \$8 billion each month, with growing casualties and no sign of progress in sight.

Other voters had questions about honesty. Is our government deliberately suppressing scientific

truths? Are they conducting matters openly and in good faith with the public? Are corporations creating federal policy? Are our leaders giving us the truth about Iraq?

Many people in rural states like West Virginia were troubled by economic and fiscal policies that slowed growth, concentrated wealth, expanded inequality, and increased our number of poor and uninsured.

Whatever an individual's motivation to go to the polls, the message to all who are elected to serve is the same: American government must return to the basic principals of fairness, honesty and accountability.

We must endeavor to replace partisanship with statesmanship.

As I prepare to embark upon an historic ninth term in the United States Senate, I have reflected on the great honor I have enjoyed in representing my fellow West Virginians for so many years.

I have always believed that the Golden Rule -- to "do unto others as you would have others do unto you" -- is more than good Scripture to live by. It is also good policy to govern by.

Be certain that, as I enter my ninth term representing the good people of the Mountain State, I will continue to work hard, be honest, and fight for West Virginia's interests.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Senior Citizens Deserve Affordable Medicines

Senior citizens in West Virginia and across the country right now are deciding whether to re-enroll in the Medicare prescription drug program -- often referred to as Medicare Part D. In West Virginia, more than 326,000 seniors currently participate in the Part D program, part of a group of 43 million Americans enrolled in the prescription coverage plan. While these men and women navigate the options available to them, many seniors also are asking why their prescriptions continue to cost so much. They want affordable medicines, not bureaucratic excuses.

I share that goal of making prescription medicines more affordable. One of the easiest ways for Medicare to help lower the costs for senior citizens is for the agency to use its bargaining power to negotiate directly with the drug companies. But, so far, the Bush Administration has resisted this commonsense idea. I cannot understand why.

Already, the Department of Veterans Affairs uses its bargaining leverage to negotiate cheaper prescription prices for America's 25 million veterans. Why not give the same benefit to the nation's senior citizens?

Pharmaceutical companies have raised prices on many top-selling medicines by six percent or more this

year -- double the overall inflation rate. Meanwhile, the majority of our senior citizens live on fixed incomes. As their prescription costs rise, they have to make difficult decisions: Do they pay for their medicines? Or do they pay for their food or housing or utilities? While that seems an extreme situation, it is, sadly, a reality facing too many seniors.

The benefit for individual seniors and for the federal government is clear. Independent studies have found that allowing Medicare to negotiate with the pharmaceutical industry could save the government and Medicare beneficiaries at least \$600 billion during the next seven years. That is a significant savings which could help to reduce the burden on American families.

In January, when the new session of Congress begins, I expect that this will be a key issue that we will face. Instead of clinging to Medicare's status quo, I hope that the Bush Administration will work with the Congress in a bipartisan effort to fix this broken prescription program. Medicare should be allowed to negotiate lower prices with the drug companies. Doing so would help to ease the financial burden facing so many of our senior citizens.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

It's Time to Tackle Poverty

Across the country, middle-class families are finding it hard to make ends meet. Often, both parents are holding down jobs just to pay the bills and save a little money for their children's college tuition. Economic experts in Washington are worried about increasing inflation, but these policy wonks are not nearly as anxious as are many West Virginia families.

These pressures are especially difficult for families struggling at minimum wage jobs. Right now, the federal minimum wage is \$5.15 an hour. Adjusted for inflation, the federal minimum wage is at its lowest level in 50 years.

Today, a person working full-time at the minimum wage earns \$10,712 annually. Nearly 15 million American workers and their families live on that income, even though it is almost \$6,000 below the poverty level for a family of three. We must raise the minimum wage, a step that the Republican White House has fought against for many years. It's time for the fighting to stop and help to arrive for working families.

When the new Congress begins in January, I will vote with what I hope will be a strong bipartisan coalition to raise the minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour. This would mean an additional \$4,400 a year for the individual minimum-wage

worker. That pay raise is a step ahead and a step away from poverty.

While Congress is considering this minimum wage hike, we also should look at ways to help businesses. Many minimum-wage earners are employed by entrepreneurs who spark our economy. If there are commonsense ways in which Congress can reduce the burden on small businesses, then we ought to help.

One step that Congress can take immediately is to approve tax credits for research and development efforts and investments in communities. There is broad bipartisan support for these tax incentives, and I hope that we can vote on these initiatives quickly and send them to the President to be signed into law.

We need to create a cycle of opportunity to replace the cycle of poverty that has engulfed too many working families. Developing incentives for businesses will create new jobs and benefits for working families. Lifting the wages of those same families will give them greater buying power at stores, a stronger ability to afford college tuition, and an overall better quality of life. We must balance our approach. If we do, we can work together not only to tackle poverty but also to build a better future for our state and nation.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Celebrating the True Christmas Story

From the time I was a boy, I have been enthralled with the Christmas season. Growing up in the Southern West Virginia coalfields, my family never had much in terms of material goods. But it never mattered how many packages there were to open on Christmas morning. What mattered was the love and the joy that we shared as a family. Christmas is not about store sales and the latest gift gadgets, but rather it is about salvation and faith.

Each year at this time, I reread the Christmas story in the Gospel of Luke to remember the words and, more importantly, the true meaning of this sacred season.

"All went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

"And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes,

and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

"And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

I hope that this Christmas will be the kind of Christmas that I remember from my boyhood – a Christmas of family and faith and love, of hope and redemption. May all West Virginians find health and happiness this Christmas season, and joy throughout the coming New Year.

December 6, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Keeping Our Promise to Fight AIDS

It has been more than 25 years since the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic was fully understood. In that time, the disease has exacted a tremendous toll, both here in the United States and throughout the world. The facts are staggering. Roughly 40 million people around the world are living with HIV -- the virus that causes the deadly disease, AIDS -- and infection rates are rising dramatically in many regions. Approximately 14,000 people are infected every day, and more than 3 million people will die from AIDS this year alone.

West Virginia has not avoided this terrible disease. Today, nearly 700 West Virginians suffer from AIDS, while more than 650 people in our state have been infected with the HIV virus. These men and women hope and pray that scientists will soon find a cure and eradicate this scourge from the earth.

The international community recently marked World AIDS Day 2006 -- a day to raise awareness and call for a renewed commitment to improving HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention efforts. The theme for World AIDS Day was accountability and the

slogan was "Stop AIDS: Keep the Promise." This message serves as an important reminder that the United States should lead the way to help alleviate the misery suffered by millions of AIDS-inflicted families across the globe.

In 2003, President Bush proposed to spend \$15 billion over five years to fight HIV/AIDS in 15 severely affected countries. Despite that promise, the White House has consistently proposed cuts in America's contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. The Global Fund is the most important multilateral funding mechanism for combating AIDS and has bipartisan support in Congress. As a nation, we ought to live up to our full commitment to fight HIV/AIDS, at home and abroad.

The Gospel of Matthew teaches, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Many of those who suffer from AIDS and HIV are the least among us. They are poor, and most live far away from what we would consider modern medical care. We have a moral obligation to help stop their suffering and find a cure for this terrible disease.

December 13, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Building Hope from Tragedy

I remember November 14, 1970. I don't remember it because of the weather or some action in Congress. I remember it because it was on that day when one of the greatest tragedies to strike our state occurred. On that day, returning from North Carolina, a plane carrying 75 Marshall University football players, coaches, university staff, community members, and crew members crashed against a Kenova hillside. Not a single person survived.

Dozens of children lost a parent in the tragedy, and quite a few lost both. Wives, husbands, brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins were taken away from their families. I had a good friend on that airplane, as did so many others. For some people, it is still difficult to talk about that crash and those whose lives were lost. That crash stole the lives of so many young people, just starting on their life's journey, and so many of our friends and loved ones, but it did not destroy the strength of spirit in the hearts of West Virginians.

Today, that spirit is being celebrated with the release of the new film, "We Are Marshall." It is

not often that I watch movies, but I look forward to seeing this one. This film will showcase what I have always believed to be West Virginia's greatest strength; namely, the character and the courage of our people.

Some people around the country may find this story an unusual narrative for the holiday season -- a movie about a plane crash and a football team. But the story in "We Are Marshall" is far more than a sports film. It contains elements of abiding love, faith, and perseverance. The miraculous ascendance of the Marshall University community from the ashes of such disaster is inspirational. It may be a story rooted in tragedy, but it is a story worth remembering and sharing.

I hope that the film about this episode in West Virginia's history will somehow carry blessings of comfort and joy during this holiday season, especially for the families of those who were lost on that terrible day. The importance of their lives, and the significance of their loss, has never been forgotten in West Virginia. Now the world will know their story, and of the love, faith, and perseverance of those who carried on.

December 20, 2006



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Forging a New Direction in Iraq

The news reports from Iraq are like a broken record, recounting the latest car bombings, insurgent attacks, and, sadly, injuries or deaths of American servicemembers. We honor all of the brave men and women serving in Iraq. However, despite their courageous efforts, our troops are caught in the crossfire of a civil war that the Bush Administration's political efforts have failed to stop. The time for staying the course is long over. We must have a new direction in Iraq.

Two recent events can help to change the course in Iraq. President Bush made the wise decision to replace Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and the Senate worked quickly to hold hearings and vote to confirm Robert Gates to fill that key position. Also, the bipartisan and well-respected Iraq Study Group delivered its report which makes clear that there is no magic wand to bring peace and stability to the volatile Middle East.

The report warns that a new approach is desperately needed, and time is running out. The status quo will serve only to widen the chasm between Iraq's warring factions, increase the dangers facing our troops, and risk greater instability throughout the Middle East. The report, coupled with a new Defense Secretary and a new Congressional major-

ity willing to ask the tough questions and hold leaders accountable, can help to spur a new direction in Iraq.

We must send a message to the world that the United States is willing to depart from the Administration's disastrous unilateral agenda that has served us so poorly. The American people and our troops in the field deserve honest leadership and fresh ideas at the Pentagon. They deserve leaders who will not just rubberstamp White House political plans, but who also will put the security of the country and the best interests of our troops at the top of their priority lists. And they deserve a Congress that will ask hard questions and demand truthful answers from those crafting our foreign and military policies.

Before the war began, there was no doubt as to the military outcome of the initial invasion of Iraq; our might was unquestioned. The doubt centered on the specious motives for war, and the repercussions that would follow. We have experienced those repercussions all too clearly, yet the White House still clings to its failed approaches. We must have a new direction for our mission in Iraq. Congress must rise to the challenge, set aside party labels, and press the White House to change its "stay the course" policy.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Lessons from the Leadership of Gerald R. Ford

The President of the United States is a powerful figure in this country. The president sets the tone for the nation. He can either challenge us to reach for our better angels, or take actions that serve to deeply divide the country. The president can either promote an agenda that brings the American people together, or he can press for policies that split us apart.

In the summer of 1974, the country was suffering. President Richard Nixon's actions in the Watergate affair only compounded the anger and distrust that people felt over the Vietnam War. The country was near a boiling point. President Nixon, on the verge of being impeached by the House of Representatives, resigned from office, elevating Gerald R. Ford -- a former Congressman from Michigan, a former Republican Leader in the House of Representatives, and the then Vice President of the United States -- to our country's highest Executive Office.

Many people across the country did not know President Ford very well. Few knew the quality of the man, as he had never run for office outside of his Congressional district. I knew Gerald Ford, having worked with him in the Congress, and I had confidence that he would be the kind of president that

we needed at that moment in time.

Gerald Ford brought to the presidency a humble tone very different from that of President Nixon. He worked to heal the nation after one of the most turbulent periods in our history. His actions were defined by his patriotism and his belief that America had to move forward instead of looking back. I have always been impressed with the quiet determination that President Ford showed in office. He understood that sharp partisanship does not serve the country well, and that political parties need to work together to forge solutions to the challenges we face.

That is a lesson that should be remembered today in Washington, D.C. Too often, more attention is paid to scoring political points than is paid to working for the American people.

As the new Congress begins, we have an opportunity to come together and put the people's priorities first. That means focusing on those issues that West Virginia families and families all across our country are most concerned about -- good jobs; access to better health care; improved classrooms. If we pull together, Democrats and Republicans, we can find the best solutions for America.

January 3, ~~2006~~
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Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

New Congress Brings New Opportunities

As the new Congress begins, I will take every opportunity to refocus our government's attention on the issues that matter most to West Virginians. I know from countless conversations with constituents throughout the state that there is a strong desire for change.

The American people expect Members of Congress to work together. The nation is tired of divisive partisan rhetoric. There is a clear mandate for the 110th Congress to put more energy towards working to achieve practical results for the people, and less on hatching political victories.

Though the Democrats now hold a majority in the Senate by the thinnest of margins, I believe the shift in power presents Congress with an opportunity to undo the partisan gridlock that has impeded good government in recent years. The new Congress will work longer hours, and we are resolved to be more open and inclusive. We will dust off the traditions of dialogue, deliberation, and decorum that have been shelved in recent years.

I intend to reach out to my Republican colleagues on the Budget Committee for their input and assistance in restoring the fiscal balance and responsibility that Americans expect from their government.

The views of my colleagues across the political aisle on the Committee on Armed Services will be welcomed, respected, and carefully considered. It will take a bipartisan effort to untangle ourselves from Iraq and provide for our national security. It will take the collective political will of both parties to meet the challenges of providing adequate care and services for our new generation of veterans.

Though needed reforms in the earmarking process are being implemented until we return fiscal responsibility and accountability to the budget process, I will continue to be mindful of the needs of my home state of West Virginia as I return to the role of Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations.

Americans have given Congress a resounding mandate to set the country on a more stable, responsible path to domestic progress and prosperity, while strengthening national security. I am excited about the opportunities this new Congress presents, and optimistic about the future of this great nation.

Progress will require hard work and great personal commitment. I stand ready and eager to continue to serve the great state of West Virginia and this great nation.

January 10, ~~2006~~
2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Learning from Martin Luther King, Jr.

Each January, the nation pauses to remember the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The lessons that he taught still carry relevance today, and, I expect, will do so for many years to come.

Dr. King's words ring so loudly today because they were based on principle and faith. He marched, preached, and spoke out for equality between races. He battled economic injustice. The Reverend Dr. King was a champion for people who had no voice, little influence, and even less opportunity. His faith in God gave him strength, conviction, and courage. He saw America as it was, and struggled to build America as we all dream it to be.

The ground has been broken on a memorial to Dr. King on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. I worked to guarantee \$10 million in federal funds for the memorial's construction. Those are dollars well-invested to honor a life well-lived. It is fitting that the country pay tribute to Dr. King at this memorial. But I hope that it is more than a tribute. Dr. King's legacy can still inspire us.

Today, we live in a nation still divided by racism and sharp partisanship. We have growing divides between the wealthy, the working class, and the poor. Too many people are being left behind in this 21st century America. Dr. King's words and actions are vibrant with energy and meaning.

"Let us rise up tonight with a greater readiness. Let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days, these days of challenge to make America what it ought to be. We have an opportunity to make America a better nation." Dr. King spoke those words in 1968, and they offer hope today. We have that opportunity to bridge the gaps of distrust and discord that divide our people. Reaching that promised land will not be easy, but few things in life worth doing ever are.

As we remember the lessons from the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., let us stand with determination against injustice and inequality, and let us work together for a better tomorrow for all of America's children and the generations yet to come.

January 17, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Building Better Fiscal Roads

There is no easy, painless way out of the fiscal chaos left behind by the outgoing Congress. In six years, we have seen a \$5 trillion surplus drained, and our government swamped in an ocean of red ink.

The outgoing Congressional leadership ended 2006 without completing work on a single appropriations bill that invests in our communities, provides medical care for veterans, fights crime, or works to make college more accessible.

As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, it is my responsibility to help provide leadership out of this fiscal mayhem.

These are dire and fiscally challenging times. State and local governments need to know how and what the federal government is funding, and Congress needs time to consider and legislate fiscal issues more responsibly. Reforms to the earmarking process are long overdue.

It is important that West Virginians know that, while extraordinary measures are being taken to restore credibility and responsibility to Congressional spending discretion, critical development projects in the state are not being abandoned.

For example, Senator Rockefeller and I worked very hard to make sure that legislation was passed during the last session that will continue the advancement of

the state's beneficial high priority projects. The decision to disallow earmarks in the Fiscal 2007 appropriations bills will not impact previous funding for meritorious projects. Congressional earmarks will be eligible for consideration in the 2008 budget under the reformed process.

I am proud of the community, economic, and research projects I have been able to help bring to West Virginia over the years, and honored to publicly sponsor those bills. However, one of the flaws of the earmarking process is that it is difficult to evaluate earmarks that are not openly sponsored by an individual legislator. It is often these "unclaimed earmarks" that are involved in corruption scandals like those involving former Representative "Duke" Cunningham and lobbyist Jack Abramoff.

It is unavoidable that bringing long overdue reforms to the appropriations process will mean short term delays in some funding areas. However, promoting fiscal responsibility and consistency is absolutely necessary in order to restore confidence and promote transparency in funding decisions.

Soon, with new standards in place for Congressionally directed investments, we will be able to move West Virginia and the country forward with a more open, more accountable federal funding process.

January 24, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Good Budget Requires Honesty and Conscience

An essential ingredient for restoring fiscal health and responsibility to government spending is honesty. Without a budget that reflects real-world numbers, it is difficult to implement real-world progress.

Regrettably, the budget that President Bush submitted to Congress recently does not provide the honest accounting necessary to make it a good roadmap for digging the nation out of debt.

As a result of an amendment that I authored this past summer, the White House is now required to include next year's anticipated war costs in Iraq and Afghanistan in the budget just presented. For too long, the Bush Administration has labored to screen the public from the huge costs of the war in Iraq and its devastating impact on domestic spending. Actual appropriations for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to date total nearly \$380 billion, and are expected to climb by about \$200 million each day.

As reflected by his budget, the cost of this President's war in Iraq is pushing more working families into poverty, restricting access to health care coverage, and starving important education initiatives.

While further extending bouquets of tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans, the President's budget

leaves many initiatives to die on the vine -- initiatives that help to provide education and health care and job creation for West Virginians.

In this budget, 300,000 children from low-income families would be dropped from child care assistance by 2010. The Head Start program, of which I have been a strong supporter, would be cut further, and a modest food security initiative that serves low-income elderly would be terminated.

Elementary and secondary education, pollution control and abatement, and health care research and training all lose billions of dollars while more of the fiscal burden for Medicaid is shifted onto state governments.

This strategy clearly intends to balance the budget on the backs of low-income and working families while larding the top one percent earners with more perks and privileges.

Fiddlesticks, I say.

Soon, I will write more about the President's shortchanging of other important areas like homeland security and rural initiatives. In the meantime, as the federal budget process moves forward, I will continue to fight for the principles of fairness and compassion that we share as West Virginians.

February 7, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

More Vigilance for Mine Safety

A little more than a year ago, West Virginians were joined in sorrow after the deaths of 14 coal miners, first at the Sago mine in Upshur County and then, just a few weeks later, at the Aracoma mine in Logan County. At the state and federal level, West Virginia officials responded with legislation aimed at addressing the key issues in those tragedies: emergency supplies; communications; and stiffer enforcement of regulations already on the books.

I have been especially concerned with the work of the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). Under this White House and its Department of Labor, regulators have subjugated their obligation to protect the safety of miners to the goal of increased productivity in coal mines. White House budgets consistently starve safety efforts, resulting in a loss of mine inspectors and antiquated safety technologies in coal mines. That must change. In Congress, we will hold the Labor Department accountable for anything less than an unequivocal commitment to the lives and health of the men and women who work in the coal mines.

However, two miners' deaths in January in Southern West Virginia serve as a somber reminder that the

crisis in the coalfields is far from over. It is time to be innovative and proactive. It is time to stop simply coping with mine disasters after they happen. We must seek opportunities to prevent the dangers in the first place.

We must make special emergency refuge chambers available to miners underground. Additionally, wireless communications should be available to coal miners as soon as possible. If that means providing more funds to federal researchers to expedite the development of wireless communications and tracking, and prodding the industry to purchase and install that equipment, then that must be done.

The federal mine safety agency needs to redouble its efforts to hire at least 170 new mine inspectors. To this end, I was successful last summer in adding \$26 million to MSHA's budget. These dollars will save lives. More inspectors and tougher enforcement means that fewer violations can be swept aside with a wink and a nod.

We have a moral obligation to protect our coal miners. The new inspectors and tougher mine safety laws are good steps forward. But better mine safety will require continued vigilance and innovation. We owe nothing less to the men and women who bravely work in the nation's mines.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Bush Budget Shortchanges Homeland Security

Recently, I wrote in this space that the 2008 budget submitted by President Bush squeezes critical domestic programs in health and education, pushes more working families into poverty, and hammers deeper wedges between the poor, the middle class, and the mega-wealthy.

The budget proposes big cuts in Medicare and Medicaid, upon which many West Virginians depend. These cuts are being made so that the President can pursue a Quixotic scheme to pay for the war in Iraq while extending more tax cuts to the well-off without revenue increases. Anyone who can balance their checkbook can instantly see the folly in this goal.

The President often speaks about his concern for the safety of Americans at home. But, once again, his rhetoric turns out to be as hollow as a ten-gallon hat. The President's budget actually proposes more than \$2.6 billion in cuts to homeland security initiatives. This includes dramatic cuts to state formula grants, Law Enforcement Terrorism Protection, Firefighter Assistance Grants, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program, and a 54 percent cut in funding for all state and local law enforcement programs in the Department of Justice.

Meanwhile, as our

homeland security capacity is ratcheted down, the conflagration of war continues to grow, and threatens to spread throughout the Middle East.

Rural states like West Virginia are heavily dependant on volunteers to serve our communities as fire-fighters and other emergency first responders. Many of these service-minded men and women are also National Guard personnel, who are being caught up in long deployments abroad. The end result is that, while one hand is reducing the number of available emergency responders in local communities, the other hand is taking away the funding that supports those emergency relief and security initiatives at home. The President's budget, in effect, creates double jeopardy for homeland security in rural areas.

The President has said himself that our emergency responders are the first line of defense during a disaster of any kind -- flood, hurricane, earthquake, or terrorist attack. He has also said many times that the security of all Americans is the top priority of his Administration.

The budget recently submitted by the President reveals serious discrepancies in his publicly stated priorities. The time for rhetoric has passed, and the moment to take action is upon us.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Keeping Amtrak On Track

Each year when the Bush Administration presents its budget, I find myself defending one of our most useful and practical public services -- Amtrak, the nation's passenger rail system. I take on this challenge because modern, growing economies need a broad range of transportation options. I work for better rail service because it is environmentally sound. A strong rail infrastructure is necessary to our national security. And I fight for passenger trains because they reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

Amtrak has been starved for more than 30 years, never receiving the kind of support that would give it the fighting chance to fulfill its great promise. Congress funds the construction of highways, seaports, subways, and airports. Interstate rail transportation should not be any different.

Bringing our rail system into the 21st century would greatly reduce U.S. oil consumption. We all have heard President Bush say that America must reduce its dependence on foreign oil. He has even said we should take carbon emissions more seriously. Slashing funding for Amtrak is counterproductive to both goals.

The rest of the world recognizes the benefits of national passenger rail, but, for some reason, the White House does not.

China, for example, is making significant investments in rail

service. One prominent Chinese project is an 820-mile link between Shanghai and Beijing, using trains with top speeds of more than 200 miles per hour. This rail line will reduce the travel time between the two major cities from 13 hours to just under five, and passengers will find the train ticket much cheaper than airfare.

When it comes to reducing auto emissions and our dependence on foreign oil, we do not need to wait on emerging technologies to become viable. We can make investments in mass transportation technologies that are available today.

Passenger rail travel is clean and safe. The 25 million people who travel by train each year can attest to that. Passenger trains carry about five times as many riders as airlines. If we abandon our support of rail travel, where would all those travelers go? And how many people in rural areas would no longer be able to afford to commute to their jobs in urban areas?

Each of the Bush Administration's annual budget requests have recommended funding levels that would bankrupt Amtrak and shut down its operations. Each year, I have worked to keep our nation's rail system on track. As Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I will continue to fight for programs that are in America's national interest.

February 28, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Mission Failure

The Bush Administration has made much use of the phrase "support the troops." The White House has used "support the troops" as the mantra to justify failed foreign policies, silence critics, and divide the electorate. What the Bush Administration has not done is put much action behind its rhetoric.

The White House sent troops into battle without body armor or protected vehicles. Congress stepped in and funded the equipment that our soldiers so desperately needed.

The White House underfunded veterans health care by billions of dollars. I and other Members of Congress stepped in to fill the breach.

No matter how hard Congress pushes back, the Bush Administration continues to treat our soldiers and veterans all too shabbily. The deplorable care for wounded service members at Walter Reed Army Medical Center is the latest example that this Administration's support-the-troops rhetoric is "all hat and no cattle."

As with other facets of government, the Bush Administration's strategy for military medical care is to squeeze it for every nickle, place party loyalists in leadership positions, and outsource any job possible.

A lawyer and real estate developer with no medical background, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Jim Nicholson's chief qualification for running the country's largest health care system appears to be that he

is a former Republican National Committee chairman. The resulting problems in the care of wounded soldiers and veterans under his watch has put the VA under intense political and public scrutiny.

Having worked for our veterans for decades on the Appropriations and Armed Services Committees -- along with Senator Rockefeller on the Committee on Veterans Affairs -- we can tell you that the egregious situations at Walter Reed are not isolated problems. There has been a systemic neglect of veterans services and a pervasive failure in leadership.

For example, the Administration's ideological pursuit of privatization at Walter Reed led to an exodus of highly qualified and experienced personnel. Federal workers have been replaced by private companies like IAP Worldwide Services, which is led by former Halliburton executives. IAP's parent company, Cerberus Capital Management, is no stranger to government contracts, big political contributions, and controversy.

Through ongoing investigations, we are certain to uncover more troubling details about the medical care of our wounded soldiers and veterans. In serving those who serve their country, it is clear we are far from "Mission Accomplished." Congress must step in where the Bush Administration has failed. Our troops protect us on the battlefield; it is time that we protected them and their families here at home.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Stopping Threats at the Border -- From the Heart of West Virginia

All of us are concerned about the vulnerabilities along the U.S.-Mexico border. There are far too few Border Patrol agents stretched out along far too many miles of border. I have worked in the Senate to significantly increase the numbers of our Border Patrol agents, resulting in the addition of thousands of new, trained border security officers.

But expanding our Border Patrol is only a start. We also must prevent those with criminal backgrounds from taking advantage of a slow bureaucracy to enter the nation before Department of Homeland Security staff can stop them. That's where men and women working at the FBI in Clarksburg have made a real difference.

Clarksburg is home to the FBI's database containing the fingerprints of criminals and potential terrorists. Already, the FBI database is linked to state and local law enforcement agencies around the country, alerting police to individuals with outstanding warrants in other jurisdictions. Instead of waiting day after day after day for a fingerprint search under the old system, the FBI Clarksburg database provides officers with the information they need in just a few hours.

The FBI has taken steps to build on that success by linking U.S. border stations with Clarksburg. When someone tries to enter the United States, Border Patrol agents are able to connect

with the FBI's Harrison County facility to check that individual's background. In 2006, the Clarksburg fingerprint system returned "hits" on more than 150,000 criminal subjects who were attempting to enter the U.S. illegally. Those individuals were prevented from walking freely in the United States. That's a remarkable accomplishment.

Recently, I met with FBI Director Robert Mueller to talk about ways to better protect our communities and our country. Director Mueller hopes to expand the mission of the Clarksburg facility and the entire FBI to stop terrorists and criminals alike.

Law enforcement agencies need the tools and the training to stop another terrorist attack before it happens. Unfortunately, the men and women tasked with protecting us are forced to do so with paltry budgets and precious few new resources. We must change that approach. Law enforcement agencies need manpower. They need money. And they need the tools to get the job done.

I will continue my efforts in the Senate to invest in law enforcement and to protect our citizens from criminals and terrorists alike. Matching technology and expertise with the security needs across the nation, like the Clarksburg FBI is doing with the Border Patrol, is moving in the right direction.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Protecting Coal, Protecting Miners

In spite of new machines that have dramatically increased the production of coal, the work of a modern coal miner remains strenuous and dangerous. Thousands of feet beneath ancient mountains, a miner toils in primordial darkness, accompanied by heavy moving machinery, electrical cables, and deadly gases that cannot be seen or smelled. The roof is sometimes only inches above a miner's steel-toed boots -- precariously propped up by what amounts to sticks and bolts.

For most Americans, coal mining evokes monochrome images of hard-scrabble coal camps, impoverished children and stoic working-class faces. But those images do not tell the whole story.

As a young boy, I eagerly awaited my father's daily return from the mine, his face a contrasting smudge of coal dust and reddened eyes, a carbon lamp perched on top his miner's hat. I looked forward to his smile, and sometimes a small piece of cake from his dinner bucket. His working in the mine was as natural as my going to school. My father was a strong and decent man who loved his job and his family. That, to me, is the true face of coal.

Growing up the son of a coal miner, and marrying a coal miner's daughter, may explain why I regard all miners as family. Recently,

I met with some family members of the 12 Sago miners who died in that mine. A tragic, preventable loss like that can leave its mark on a family -- and on a state -- forever.

That the deaths at Sago were preventable makes it clear that advances in safety have not kept pace with advances in production. We must strengthen safety measures in the coal industry on several fronts.

Through approval of the federal MINER Act, we have launched measures to increase safety regulations, enforcement and emergency response. This was a good beginning, but by no means an end.

Last summer, I included \$25.6 million in special funding to allow MSHA to hire and train 170 new coal mine safety inspectors. An additional \$10 million was directed toward the development of new communications and rescue technologies that can speed efforts to save miners after an explosion or collapse.

Though different reports draw different conclusions about the causes of the Sago tragedy, there is no question that government, industry, and labor must embrace substantial improvements in mine safety in order to affect meaningful change. We share a moral obligation to protect our coal miners to the very best of our ability. We must not fail.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Federal Budget That's Good for West Virginia

After six years of federal budgets devised to favor the wealthy, starve social initiatives, and fund a disastrous and costly war, the new Democratic majority in the Senate has passed a budget more in tune with West Virginia's priorities.

The Senate budget approved recently invests 25 times more than the Bush Administration proposed for children's health care, providing up to \$50 billion in medical services over the next five years for our children most in need.

The budget also increases funding for education by \$6 billion above the White House plan, invests \$43.1 billion in medical care for our veterans, and protects the Medicare and Social Security trust funds.

Instead of lavishing several more large tax breaks on those who are already financially secure, the budget passed by the Senate targets relief for working middle class families. Working families are the heart and soul of America, and in recent years they have been feeling pressure from all sides. This new budget reaches out to those families.

The budget also strives for some degree of fiscal responsibility, reinstating a "pay-as-you-go" rule that includes both spending programs and tax cuts.

West Virginians are fed up with the runaway deficit spending that has been a hallmark of the Bush Administration. This budget cuts taxes for the middle class and contains no new tax increases. Revenues are raised by cracking down on tax cheats, closing tax loopholes, and making it harder for companies to hide money in secretive offshore accounts to evade taxes.

The impact of this budget on health care in West Virginia and across the country is significant. Our health care system is in crisis. As many as 46 million Americans -- including 275,000 West Virginians -- are without any health insurance. As a nation, we cannot continue to close our eyes to this reality. The Senate budget begins to make the investments to ensure access to health care for all Americans.

Finally, the Senate has passed a budget that makes good investments in health care, education, veterans, and other sorely neglected priorities.

America's fiscal burden has been balanced on the backs of the middle class for far too long. The budget recently passed by the Senate goes a long way toward acknowledging that the days of comforting the comfortable must come to a close.

March 28, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Pledging Allegiance to Our Veterans

As recent news reports have detailed, many soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are not being provided the care that they have earned and deserve. Through investigations and Congressional hearings, it has become evident that the deplorable conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center are but the tip of the iceberg.

We have heard first-hand accounts of soldiers being denied or delayed proper care and of nettlesome bureaucratic tangles. These reports raise serious concerns about the capacity of the military and the Veterans Affairs (VA) medical system to deliver proper care and treatment. In particular, the VA appears to be having difficulty dealing with the long-term health care challenges many of our soldiers face as the result of brain injuries, post-traumatic stress, and other debilitating physical and psychological wounds so tragically common among our Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

Senator Rockefeller and I have fought for veterans' benefits for many years now. Through my work on the Committee on Appropriations and Senator Rockefeller's many years of solid leadership on the Committee on Veterans Affairs, we have worked hard to improve veterans' services in West Virginia, particularly for those who live in very rural areas.

As part of our ongoing collaboration on behalf of veterans, Senator Rockefeller and I have set up special email accounts for soldiers and veterans to contact us directly and share their own personal experiences. Good or bad, we are very interested in hearing from West Virginia's veterans, servicemembers, and their families about what is working well, what needs improvement, and how the delivery of medical services through the VA might be improved.

Veterans, their families, and employees of the VA health care system are encouraged to write us at vets@byrd.senate.gov with their personal experiences and ideas. While we intend to use this feedback to develop a better understanding of the current state of West Virginia's VA health care system, individual names will be kept strictly confidential.

Next year, the VA expects to treat 263,000 veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. These brave men and women have served our nation in the most dangerous and volatile places on earth. Too many of our troops are returning injured, debilitated and battle-scarred for life. It is a moral imperative that we meet their needs to the best of our abilities, and with the highest degree of quality, professionalism, compassion and honor befitting their service.

April 4, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Reforming the Congressional Earmark Process

Often, the words "Congressional earmarks" are, unfortunately, met with derision. I believe in the good that earmarks can do, and I am not alone. In fact, the Constitution's Framers understood that the people's elected representatives needed the ability to respond to the public's problems, and so they placed the power of the purse in Congress. Today, a Congressional earmark is often the only way to ensure that a good idea becomes reality.

Many meritorious West Virginia projects would never have happened without earmarked funding. For example, tens of thousands of people have clean drinking water because of my Senate work. Recently, I directed \$23 million toward a Randolph County project to help 21,500 West Virginians. No longer will they worry about the safety of the water in their homes.

Much of the advanced medical technology at West Virginia University is the result of funding that I earmarked in federal legislation. The cancer center, the eye institute, the trauma center, the neurosciences institute -- these facilities provide cutting-edge care for people throughout the state and were built with millions of dollars that I fought for in appropriations bills.

My earmarks in West Virginia create jobs and build a better future for the state.

The benefits of Congressional earmarks do not stop at our state's borders.

Earmarks launched the Human Genome Project, which has dramatically improved disease treatment and prevention, saving many lives. Earmarks funded the Predator and Global Hawk aircraft. These unmanned planes have been among the most effective assets in the military's effort to track, target, and capture terrorists.

Sadly, there have been abuses in the Congressional funding system. These high-profile cases have resulted in Members of Congress being forced from office in disgrace and ultimately going to jail. The sins of a few have tarnished Congress, and we have an obligation to restore the integrity of the institution.

That is why, as Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman, I have put in place tougher standards for accountability and openness. Earmarks will be clearly identified. The public will know which Senator asked for funding, how much is provided, the purpose of the funding, and which individual or organization will receive the dollars. In addition, Senators will have to certify that they have no financial interest in any earmark.

Congress has a responsibility to help expand opportunity for our families and to invest in a better future for generations to follow. That work will continue to include funding key initiatives through Congressional earmarks in a responsible and open manner.

April 18, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Small Businesses Drive Our Economy

West Virginians are always thrilled by major announcements that large manufacturers are locating or expanding in our state. Yet, when a local business adds five or ten employees not much attention is paid. But multiply those five or ten employees by the number of small businesses in West Virginia, and it becomes clear that these small employers are the real economic engine of our state.

Small businesses drive innovation and opportunity. They create jobs and provide key services for the people in their communities. I have been proud to support many of these entrepreneurs through my work in the Senate by helping to expand specialized training or pairing local businesses with federal agencies.

Right now in our state, we have an opportunity to achieve great things together, and to help ensure economic prosperity for many years to come. But we must work together. This is a time for statewide cooperation. It does not matter whether one is from Charleston or Wheeling or Martinsburg or Hinton. We must all pull together to improve the prosperity of our state.

I use my experience to get things done from Washington, but I rely on the people of West Virginia to let me know what helps them most. One priority that I hear almost every day is the need for investments in West Virginia's infrastructure--projects like roads, highways, water and sewer systems, and airport improvements. Modern and well-maintained public works attract new jobs, help communities to thrive, and ensure a better life for our people. To me, such investments represent the most bang for the taxpayers' buck because good highways, clean water, modern schools, safe parks, and easy access to health care benefit everyone.

In the early 19th century, Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, "I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving." West Virginians have always embraced progress with an eye toward the next opportunity. Thriving small businesses create that opportunity, not only for this generation of West Virginians, but also for generations of Mountaineers to come.

April 25, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

“American Eagle Day” Pays Tribute to the Nation’s Spirit

I am very pleased to announce that the United States Senate has unanimously approved a resolution, sponsored by Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee and myself, designating June 20, 2007, as “American Eagle Day.”

On June 20, 1782, the Second Continental Congress selected the American Bald Eagle as America’s national symbol. Our Founding Fathers, in their wisdom, recognized this magnificent creature as the embodiment of America’s soaring optimism and love of freedom. For the past 225 years, the Bald Eagle has served as an inspiration for generations of Americans. Until now, there has never been a national occasion to recognize America’s inspirational bird and the special meaning it has for millions of Americans.

In April, I welcomed Challenger, the first American Eagle in history trained to free-fly into major sporting events, to my Capitol Hill Office for the announcement of the bill’s introduction. I was truly inspired by the strength and grace of this magnificent eagle. It is hard to believe that forty years ago, the Bald Eagle was almost lost. However, thanks to federal protections and the hard

work of conservationists, the American Bald Eagle now represents one of the great recovery stories in our nation’s history. As recently as 1963, there were roughly 400 nesting pairs of Bald Eagles in North America. Today, the species is flourishing once again, with approximately 7,000 to 8,000 pairs thriving in the wild.

As we celebrate West Virginia Day on June 20, Americans across the country will have the opportunity to recognize what this majestic bird represents for the American people. “American Eagle Day” will serve as an annual occasion for Americans to celebrate the ideals represented by the Bald Eagle, and to recognize the remarkable recovery of the species, which is proposed to be removed from its current threatened status later this year.

On June 20, citizens are encouraged to remember the principles upon which our country’s greatness was founded, renew the American spirit of pride and patriotism, and recall the story of how our National Symbol came to be. We almost lost its living presence in the wild to extinction, but we have rallied together and saved the Bald Eagle for posterity.

May 2, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Finding a Plan for Peace and Security

More than four years ago, American military forces toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein. The skill of our troops overwhelmed that dictator, showing that preparation and foresight can provide a strong advantage in any challenge.

Unfortunately, preparation and foresight vanished when the Bush Administration moved forward with its occupation of Iraq. With the Saddam Hussein regime gone, the Iraqis turned to the U.S. for help in crafting a new government. But the political leadership at the White House failed. The military victory was not matched by security and economic stability. As a result, Iraq is a nation embroiled in civil war.

Peace now demands an Iraqi-led political solution to bridge the ethnic and sectarian divisions that are splitting the country -- a solution which, to date, the Iraqi government has been unable or unwilling to take on. That is why Congress approved legislation that offered a new beginning for the reconstruction and the stability of Iraq, and shifted the responsibility for that nation's long-term success to the Iraqi people themselves.

Regrettably, President Bush vetoed the proposal. His choice was unwise, and its consequences will echo for a long time. This veto ensures that hundreds, maybe thousands, more will die in Iraq. It forces our

military to continue to pursue a mission impossible, creating democracy at the point of an American gun.

The President's choices carry consequences at home, as well. When a deadly tornado struck Kansas recently, the Kansas governor was hamstrung. That state's National Guard was forced to leave its emergency equipment in Iraq after a recent tour of duty. Equipment that had been positioned throughout the state for just such a crisis was sitting thousands of miles away. Help was slow in coming.

This problem is not unique to Kansas, which is why Congress, in that same Iraq-related legislation, included \$1 billion to replace the trucks and heavy equipment that Guard units have been directed to leave in the sands of Iraq. If the White House clings to its failing strategy in Iraq, we will see more stories of heartache like those from Kansas. The President's single-minded obsession with Iraq has dire consequences for all other priorities here at home.

Congress has begun work on a new version of the Iraq-related legislation. We will not delay. But we also will continue to press for a strong, intelligent foreign policy that does not rely on military might alone. And we will not stop in our efforts to bring peace to Iraq and our troops home from war.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

West Virginia's WWI Veteran Is America's Hero

April 6, 2007, marked the 90th anniversary of America's entrance into World War I. That historic conflict marked America's arrival onto the world stage, and our emergence as a global superpower.

Nearly 5 million Americans served in the U.S. military during that "war to end all wars." Only four are still living. I am proud to say that one of them is a hale and hearty West Virginian, my friend Frank Woodruff Buckles of Charles Town.

In 1917, Private Frank Buckles boldly stepped forward to serve the Army as a doughboy. He was so compelled to serve that -- at the age of 16 -- he lied about his age in order to enlist, and served his country in England and France. But the drama of his life, as compelling as any novel or film, did not end with his official military service.

His work on a commercial steamship took him to Nazi Germany, where he attended the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. There, Frank Buckles saw German Chancellor Adolph Hitler bristle with embarrassment as the great Jesse Owens won four gold medals for the United States.

His maritime career landed him in the Philippines in 1940, where he was working in Manila when

the Japanese invaded. Mr. Buckles was captured and spent the next 3 ½ years in Japanese prison camps where, although a civilian, he was treated as a prisoner of war. At dawn on February 23, 1945, the same day that the American flag was raised on Iwo Jima's Mount Suribachi, the 11th Airborne Division liberated Mr. Buckles and his fellow prisoners.

In 1954, Frank Buckles and his wife, Audrey, moved to a 330-acre farm in the West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle, the same area where his ancestor, Robert Buckles, had settled in 1732. For more than five decades, Mr. Buckles has continued to operate his beloved farm.

Today, at the age of 106, this sturdy West Virginian is still going strong and will proudly serve as Grand Marshal of the World War I section of the Memorial Day parade in Washington D.C.

West Virginia is blessed with so many examples of men and women of extraordinary character and bravery. We should salute people like Frank Buckles -- and the thousands of people whose names are not so well known -- for their inspiring commitment and sacrifice, keeping them close to our hearts and always in our prayers.

May 23, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Making Wise Investments for America

It is time to roll up my sleeves and go to work once more for West Virginia in the Senate Appropriations Committee. This month, the committee, which I lead, will begin to write the federal funding bills for the next fiscal year. These bills are crucial for our state and this nation. The decisions that the Appropriations Committee makes will set the pace for America's progress.

The first bill to come before my committee will help to secure this country from terrorist attack. There are too many gaps in our protections. Cargo is not checked for explosives before being loaded on airplanes. The northern and southern borders remain far too wide open. Critical infrastructure sites, like chemical plants and power facilities, are far too vulnerable. Police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical teams still do not receive the equipment and support that they need to meet the realities of the times.

We need to address these major gaps in homeland security. The federal government must not just pay lip service to protecting our citizens. It is long past time to invest the dollars in the security of this country. If we do not, American lives will continue to be needlessly at risk.

The second piece of legislation that will come before the Appropriations Committee is one that pays for the medical care for our veterans.

During the past several weeks, Senator Rockefeller and I have heard from West Virginia veterans about the quality of their medical care. One fact is clear: there are not enough doctors and nurses to handle the medical needs of our veterans. With wounded heroes coming home from war every day, and with veterans of past conflicts already standing in long lines for treatment, we must invest in their care.

Make no mistake, there are tough choices ahead. The list of pressing funding demands across the country seems to be endless, but the resources are not. We need to wisely invest the people's money to ensure a brighter future for the nation.

As these bills move forward, I will update you on their progress. The lives of people in West Virginia will be directly affected by the choices that the Appropriations Committee makes. Jobs, health care, security, education, worker training and safety -- all of these issues are shaped by the appropriations bills. I will continue to do all that I can to build a brighter future for our state and to create new opportunities for generations of Mountaineers to come.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Honoring the Spirit of West Virginia

On June 20, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed the official proclamation declaring West Virginia statehood. On each successive June 20 since then, Mountaineers not only celebrate our heritage, but also rededicate ourselves to the future of our state.

In the Senate, I use West Virginia Day to share some thoughts about the Mountain State with other Senators and with people from across the nation. Sometimes I speak about our state's natural beauty, which is second to none. Other times, I talk about the history of our state and its origins during the Civil War. But I think that people are most impressed when I talk about the true strength of West Virginia -- her people.

I have traveled around the world. I have met presidents and kings and prime ministers. I have dined with royalty. I have shaken hands with religious leaders from many denominations. And while many of these men and women were impressive, I have found that no people anywhere compare with the people of our state.

It is hard to quantify what sets West Virginians apart. Personally, I think that it is a combination of factors, the first being an unabiding belief in the

Creator. West Virginians carry that faith in God in our hearts. It serves as the foundation for everything we do.

Another uniquely West Virginia characteristic is that we treat everyone as family. We show people respect, treating them as we ourselves would want to be treated. If someone is in trouble, the entire community rallies to their aid. If a neighbor needs a hand, there are always people ready to pitch in. Nowhere that I have traveled have I seen the same devotion to others as I do in our state.

As we celebrate our 144th year as a state and begin the journey to the next anniversary, I hope that we will hold fast to the values that set us apart. These values may be old fashioned, but they will never be out of style.

We have great opportunities ahead of us. To reach them, and to harness the bright future that we want for our state, we must dedicate ourselves to reaching these goals. It will take imagination and innovation. But, most of all, it will take the strength of a united people who believe in each other and who care for one another.

Happy birthday, West Virginia! And my best wishes for many, many more.

June 14, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Using Coal to Power Energy Independence

For too long, the United States' energy policy has been crafted more to suit political agenda than energy independence. As a result, our nation relies heavily on foreign oil for our cars, trucks, and airplanes. That reliance has subjected us to the whims of foreign rulers whose priorities and objectives are often far different than our own. It is time to break free of those chains and become truly energy independent.

The Senate is debating legislation that offers the opportunity to invest in fuel resources here at home. The legislation also provides a chance to develop new technologies which utilize those resources more cleanly and affordably. The United States has an enormous supply of one of these resources right here at home -- coal. But we have not invested in the technologies necessary to convert coal to new energy uses.

It is time to think about coal in new ways. No longer can it be only a fuel source for power plants. The technology exists today to transform coal into clean transportation fuels. Imagine pulling up to the pump and seeing an option for coal-based fuel right next to the oil-based gasoline. The choice is not that far into the future.

Coal is not the only answer to our energy independence, but it must be a major piece of the puzzle. Right now, coal provides about 50 percent of the nation's entire supply of electricity. We cannot afford to walk away from coal. But neither can we afford to stand still and rely on technologies that are 30, 40, even 50 years old to power our economy.

In this legislation, I am working with Senator Rockefeller and a coalition of Senators to provide the incentives to speed the installation of modern, clean, coal-focused technologies in existing power facilities. We also want to encourage private investments in plants that can turn coal into transportation fuels with lower pollution emissions and more efficient processes than are in place today.

Our nation's energy policy should not be dictated by the whims of foreign countries. For too long, these foreign oil producers have been telling our families how much we will pay at the gas pump. Our military is being used as a protection force for the oil lines in the Middle East. It is time for America to be powered by American resources and American know-how. It is time for America to work to achieve energy independence.

June 20, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Promises Made, Promises Kept

A few weeks ago, I reported that the Senate Appropriations Committee, which I lead, was beginning work on next year's federal funding bills. It was time for West Virginia priorities and values to take center stage in Washington, D.C.

The first piece of legislation approved by the Appropriations Committee funds the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The White House and many in Congress have made "homeland security" a great political slogan, but have refused to put resources behind their rhetoric. America's security was funded with spare change.

I am proud to report that I have been able to reverse this short-sighted approach. The Senate bill invests \$37.6 billion in anti-terrorist efforts here at home. We commit resources to border security, securing air cargo, equipping and training community first responders, and securing our ports. We have a responsibility to the American people to invest funds in real security efforts and respond to known vulnerabilities. That is a promise which Members of Congress have made, and that is a promise that my legislation keeps.

The second piece of legislation to move through my Appropriations Committee funds medical care for veterans, whether they are heroes just home from war or troops from

wars past.

The legislation I shepherded through the Appropriations Committee provides \$43 billion for veterans' medical care, an increase of \$6.5 billion from the current funding. That increase avoids the dangerous budget shortfalls that have jeopardized quality health care for all veterans and should cut down on the waiting times at veterans' medical facilities. These dollars will help to expand treatment of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The increase will pay for new claims processors to address the Veterans Administration (VA) service backlog, and invest in VA repair and maintenance needs to prevent a Walter Reed-type situation in the VA system.

These results represent West Virginia values. We protect our communities. We care for our soldiers. We respond to the greatest needs we face. I am proud of the work that we have accomplished so far in the Appropriations Committee.

Later this month, several more pieces of legislation are on deck. We will fund the military. We will work on improvements for roads, highways, and airports. And we will continue to make decisions that invest in America and build a better future for our country.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Roads to Saving Lives and Creating Jobs

As I travel throughout West Virginia, I hear one comment in almost every location: "Senator, we need better highways." For as long as I can remember, improving our roads and highways has been a top concern for Mountain State residents.

Unfortunately, addressing that concern is not as easy as one might hope. It is not easy, nor is it cheap, to build roads that zigzag through our mountains. But I have not let those difficulties deter me from working to steer vital federal road construction dollars to West Virginia.

In legislation that I expect to come before the Senate in the next few weeks, I have worked to increase West Virginia's highway construction funding by \$26 million - - to more than \$356.1 million for next year. To augment those dollars, I have added funds for specific projects throughout the state, from the Eastern Panhandle through the Potomac Highlands, from the Southern Coalfields to the Northern Panhandle. There are urgent highway priorities all across our state, and these extra dollars should help to jumpstart many of them.

People often ask me: "Senator,

why do you care so much about roads and highways?" Modern highways mean safer highways. The safety of the people of West Virginia is of paramount importance to me. Traveling to and from church should not be dangerous. Driving to school or work in the morning should not be hazardous. But two-lane roads with sharp turns and blind corners certainly compromise safety. By investing in wider, straighter roads, we invest in the safety of our people and help to save lives.

The economic benefit that a modern road and highway system can bring to an area is also very important. Not only is there the significant employment provided by road construction, but business development tends to follow close behind major road improvements. When business is growing, more people are working and communities can reap rewards.

I will continue my efforts to invest in the basic infrastructure of our state, including our roads and highways. Better roads save lives. Better roads bring jobs. Better roads pave the way to a brighter future for West Virginia. It's just that simple.

July 18, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Time For Service

Since the United States went to war with Iraq in March 2003, a disturbing trend has accelerated to a dangerous point. Americans with differing views on the war have declared rhetorical war against one another. No longer is a difference of opinion seen merely as an alternative point of view from a fellow citizen. Today, disagreements often lead to charges of faltering patriotism or even scorn. Such attitudes thrive at both ends of the political spectrum, and the fallout could potentially cause great damage to our nation.

As a country, and as a people, we must always remember that there is much more that unites us than divides us. Our common belief in justice, freedom of religion, fairness, individual rights, and the time-honored principles embodied in our great Constitution binds us together. Historically, we have always been a people characterized by helping hands, not tightened fists. We need to step back from the current poisonous partisan invective and remember our common purpose.

I believe that one of the best ways to draw the venom from the political backbiting in this country and begin the healing process is through community service. Throughout the United States, there are

people in desperate need. In our own communities in West Virginia, there is a litany of projects, large and small, which are in need of willing volunteers. If each of us were to spend just a few hours a month working for a community service project, I believe it would go a long way towards creating empathy and understanding for our fellow citizens.

I have been in politics for a long time. I understand the realities of the rough and tumble political world. But, politics is not the be-all and end-all for us as Americans. When we take the time to see others as neighbors and fellow human beings, when we make an effort to join together to improve our communities and our great country, harsh political divides fall away. When we reach out to others we can get past the stereotypical images that partisan talk show hosts, newspaper columnists and television talking heads peddle to us for profit, and begin to appreciate each other as the unique and valuable individuals we truly are. For the sake of our nation, and for the future of our children, it is time to rededicate ourselves to helping each other. In this way, we can give back to the society that has given all of us so very much.

July 25, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

West Virginia Can Compete Globally

When it comes to competing in the global economy, good old fashioned American ingenuity has been the key to our success. Our ability to continue to stimulate and lead innovation here at home will play a great role in determining whether we can sustain our place as the world's economic superpower.

West Virginia's economy has long been based in strong core industries like coal, steel, and chemicals. I have worked very hard to expand the opportunities for growth in our manufacturing industries. Even in these traditionally labor-intensive sectors, we must continually strive for innovation, relying on increasing our brain power as well as our muscle.

Thankfully, there is no shortage of "can-do" attitude in West Virginia. While it is true that we have seen a troubling increase in the migration of American jobs overseas this decade, we have worked very hard in West Virginia to protect and expand our manufacturing base.

In 1990, the Robert C. Byrd Institute for Advanced Flexible Manufacturing (RCBI) was created in Huntington, and now has locations in South Charleston, Bridgeport and Rocket Center. Its mission is to help introduce new concepts and processes to manufacturers. Through the RCBI's "teaching factories," manufacturing companies and their

workers can get hands-on experience and training with computer-controlled mills, lathes and other new and developing state-of-the-art technologies.

The RCBI is directly responsible for bringing more than 1,000 good-paying, highly skilled jobs to the region, while adding \$290 million in output to state businesses that use its services. Since January 2001, the RCBI has helped manufacturers secure more than 60 new Department of Defense and other federal government agency contracts worth more than \$100 million.

I have always believed that there are few problems in West Virginia that cannot be solved by the creation of more quality jobs. Despite some in the media who depict West Virginia's economy as perennially lodged behind the proverbial eight ball, more and more are discovering that West Virginia is a great place to live and do business.

From supplying the nation's energy needs with our high quality coal, to pioneering new advances in manufacturing techniques and breakthrough technologies, West Virginia is staking its claim on the technological revolution. Our strong manufacturing base is already busy helping to shape that revolution, providing direct benefits today and new job opportunities for the future.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Honoring Our Wounded Warriors

Most Americans are painfully aware of the fact that more than 4,000 of our soldiers have lost their lives serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Fewer may be aware that over 30,000 of our servicemen and women have been wounded in these conflicts. Many of our troops are returning home with terrible physical injuries -- missing arms or legs -- and nearly all bear emotional scars that, for some, may never heal. The sacrifices that have been made by these brave souls and their loved ones are impossible to measure.

The men and women who risk their lives fighting for our nation are performing the most noble and courageous duty imaginable. It is our moral responsibility to ensure that those who have been wounded are treated not only with excellent care, but also with the dignity and respect they deserve.

It is clear that America's military and veterans' health care systems are woefully unprepared to meet the needs of our returning troops. As evidenced by the revelation of deplorable conditions at the Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, the quality of care provided for our wounded veterans is, in far too many cases, completely unacceptable. In fact, it is a national disgrace.

That is why Senator Jay Rockefeller and I have been working to tackle this problem. Together, we co-

sponsored legislation that addresses serious shortcomings in the care of injured veterans in West Virginia and across the country. The "Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act", which recently passed the U.S. Senate, strengthens health care for veterans, and eliminates cumbersome bureaucratic barriers facing our wounded servicemen and women.

The bill invests in medical research for the treatment of combat-related injuries, requires a comprehensive policy on the care and transition from the military to VA or civilian life for service members with combat-related injuries or illnesses, and authorizes the military and VA to provide emergency medical care and counseling to family members.

Earlier this year, with the support of Senator Rockefeller, I was proud to author legislation that increased funding for the VA medical system by more than \$3.6 billion over last year. I am hopeful that the new reforms in the Wounded Warriors bill, combined with the increased funding the new Congress has directed to veterans' health care, will begin to rectify the outrageous injustice that has faced far too many of our wounded warriors upon their return home. The status quo is deplorable. Our wounded heroes deserve much better.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

LABOR'S LEGACY

"Let us have a festive day during which a parade through the streets of the city would permit public tribute to American industry."

So spoke the fiery, red-headed Irishman known as Peter McGuire to the 1882 Central Union meeting in New York City. A carpenter by trade, McGuire was steeped in the labor politics of Michigan and Missouri, and had spent two decades organizing disparate construction workers into the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.

That following September, after McGuire publicly suggested there be a day to honor those "who from rude nature have delved and carved all the grandeur we behold," workers in New York acted on his proposal and staged a parade up Broadway to Union Square. Despite harsh warnings by their employers against marching, more than 10,000 turned out to participate in the parade. President Grover Cleveland, by no means a friend of labor, was moved by the growing worker's rights movement and in 1894 declared that the first Monday in September would become a national holiday called Labor Day.

Though the efforts of people like Peter McGuire eventually led to important victories for workers like decent pay, workplace safety, overtime, sick leave, and health care, these basic benefits were not won

without great struggle and sacrifice.

In 1930, over 35,000 jobless workers marched in Chicago to protest against national unemployment and hunger, drawing much needed attention from the White House. The combination of these labor parades and protests contributed to the passage of the National Labor Relations Act the same year.

West Virginia, with an economic base in extractive and manufacturing industries, has a long and storied labor history punctuated with colorful characters and dramatic events.

When the availability of German-made chemicals became scarce during World War I, West Virginia's great chemical industry was born. Both World Wars brought the rapid expansion of coal mines and steel mills. Such accelerated growth naturally contributed to some labor problems, especially in the coal mines where wages were low, hours were grueling, and working conditions extremely dangerous.

Although many great victories have been won for workers since those days, we are still fighting to increase hourly wages, make health care more accessible and affordable for working families, ensure that safety regulations are enforced, and pensions are protected.

I am proud to stand with my union friends and family on Labor Day, and recognize their many contributions to all workers everywhere.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Scientific Advancement is America's History and Future

Last month, it was once again my great privilege to host the annual National Youth Science Camp Luncheon in Washington, D.C. The science camp, which began in 1963 as part of West Virginia's Centennial Celebration, draws recent high school graduates from each state to Camp Bartow in Bartow, West Virginia. Attendees, all of whom have demonstrated a genuine interest in the sciences, are chosen by representatives of their state's respective governors. This year, three bright young West Virginians -- John Cavendish of Morgantown, Alex McPherson of Huntington, and James Koval of Charleston -- were selected to participate in this terrific program. The camp helps to develop the students' scientific talents, and encourages and inspires them to pursue careers in this exciting and rewarding arena of human endeavor.

When I address these aspiring scientists each year, I can't help but believe that they hold the future of our great nation in their hands. The scientific discoveries of the twenty-first century promise to be awe-inspiring. In this century, I believe Americans will set foot on Mars, find a cure for cancer, and develop solutions for our most vexing environmental problems. I am just as confident that some of the young people whom I

address in these luncheons will contribute to these marvelous achievements.

Scientific progress is in the interest of every American. Scientific progress is the backbone of our economy, the promise of our health care system, and the foundation of our national security. Science helped our nation win World War II. It helped our nation win the Cold War. It won the space race. Scientific advancement is the future of the United States.

More than a century and a half ago, the famous French political thinker, as well as observer of the American scene, Alexis de Tocqueville, pointed to the uniqueness and greatness of the United States, when he wrote: "The incredible American believes that if something has not yet been accomplished, it is because he has not yet attempted it."

How right he was. Exploration and discovery are essential components of the American national tradition. They are a part of the American character.

Americans have always been and will always be a bold, pioneering people, seeking out new and untried frontiers. The young scientists that attended this luncheon are proof of our nation's enduring thirst for scientific knowledge and advancement in the greatest of American achievements.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Enforcing Mine Safety Laws Must Remain Our Priority

When disaster struck at the Sago mine last year, it was described by some as an "anomaly." Then, last month, in the short span of twelve days (August 4 and August 16), seven miners were killed, and six more are presumed dead, perhaps permanently entombed at Crandall Canyon in Utah. On Labor Day, another miner lost his life, right here in West Virginia, in Mingo County. Altogether, the total number of coal fatalities this year doubled in less than a month.

It should be clear now that these tragedies are not "anomalies." To claim that they are is an insult to the families of the deceased, and a shallow attempt to deny that something has gone terribly wrong within the agencies and offices charged with the safety and health of our nation's coal miners.

The federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) was intended to be a strong federal agency. It is blessed with career employees, many of them natives of West Virginia, who are the brightest mine experts in the world. It is infuriating to watch the political leadership in Washington, DC, not take advantage of the resources they have, especially here in West Virginia.

At a recent Senate hearing, I

raised my concerns with the administrator of MSHA, Richard Stickler. I let him know how I, along with my colleagues in the Senate, will not tolerate a continuation of MSHA's current course, influenced more by politics than the safety and well being of the miners they are charged with protecting.

Miners have chosen a noble and honorable profession, which supplies the much needed energy that helps to fuel our nation. And that critical work is undermined by every partisan decision, every misguided and incompetent action, and every failure by the political leadership in Washington to enforce the law and to ensure the safest working environment for our nation's miners.

It is past time for the agency to get rid of the political dead weight and to empower its inspectors and employees to go after the recalcitrant coal operators who are jeopardizing the coal industry and daily putting the lives of our miners at risk.

I assure my fellow West Virginians, especially those who earn their daily bread by working in the coal fields, that I will continue to do all that I can to protect the health and safety of our miners.

September 5, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Leave No Schools Behind

While students across the state are settling into classrooms this month, Congress is preparing to debate the reauthorization of the education reform act, known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Nearly five years ago, I voted for NCLB. I supported the reforms in that law. But we have come to learn that schools need more funding and more support from Congress if we're truly going to leave no child behind.

When Congress passed NCLB in 2002, we made a deal with the American people. We said that from now on, we will hold schools more accountable than ever before. We will require them to make sure that all children succeed academically. Not just the wealthy, not just those who live in the nice parts of town, but all children -- students from Appalachia to Alaska, children with disabilities, and students of all races and ethnicities.

Congress has learned, since the implementation of NCLB, that we need to make good on the promises made to our students, teachers, and families in the law. West Virginia's schools need to be given more access to tools that will help our students meet NCLB's testing mandates and requirements.

As part of NCLB, the federal government is supposed to provide direct assistance to children from

poorer schools. Currently, about half of West Virginia's public schools receive Title I funding. The Title I funding helps students who need help the most -- those schools in rural communities and low income areas. Every child has a right to reach his or her potential, but that right has been stifled by unfulfilled promises to our schools.

In this year's federal budget, I worked with my colleagues to include more money for Title I in elementary and secondary schools; to reserve funds to make pre-school more accessible, and provide tax breaks for teachers who purchase their own school supplies. The budget fixes years of broken funding promises from the Bush Administration that have short-changed our teachers, principals, students and parents.

For years, schools have been hamstrung with unfunded mandates and paltry federal support that make the existing challenges facing our teachers much more difficult. Schools are working hard to meet increasing federal education guidelines in NCLB, but Congress must do its part to help teachers and students meet these expectations.

By providing students and teachers with the resources that they need to succeed, we can meet the goals of NCLB and help all of our students reach their full learning potential.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Celebrating the Heart and Soul of Our Nation

This week, September 17, 2007, marked the 220th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution of the United States. Across West Virginia and the nation, many students, teachers, historians, and federal employees spent time reviewing, learning about, and most of all, appreciating the United States Constitution.

To mark Constitution Day, I visited Wheeling Jesuit University and spoke to more than 100 Ohio Valley grade and high school students about the Constitution. Through streaming technology, my speech was broadcast to another 12,000 students in states across the country. I discussed the history of the document that is the heart and soul of our nation, and encouraged students to learn more about the workhorse that is our Constitution.

For 220 years, the Constitution has remained a living, breathing document, still as full of passion, patriotism, and intrigue as the plot of a Shakespearean play. Perhaps this is because the Constitution, like many of Shakespeare's works, deals with the relations between human beings in society. The Constitution's articles and amendments lay out the roles for its actors – the executive, the legislature, the judiciary, the states, and the rights of individuals. The script is basic – run a country and ensure the welfare of its citizens. But,

being human, people never seem content with playing out their own roles as written. History is replete with examples of governmental actors who sought to expand their influence at the expense of the other players. Fortunately, history is also full of instances when the grasping star's excesses were checked by the concerted actions of the rest of the cast.

I have always found this historical drama more stimulating and more absorbing than any television program. Perhaps it is because the Constitutional drama has played such a large role in my own life. In the 220 year history of this nation's Constitution, there have been only 1,896 individuals fortunate enough to serve as Senators. I am number 1,579, and have served longer than any other U.S. Senator in American history.

But whether or not each citizen has a direct role in our Constitutional drama, none of us should be a mere spectator. The Constitution plays a key role in the life of every citizen. I encourage everyone to read the Constitution, the Federalist Papers, and other writings by our Founding Fathers. Read deeply of history and personal biographies, and follow what is happening in Washington, D.C. Then you will become that most valuable of all things: a true defender of liberty – an informed citizen.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

No More Blank Checks for the Iraq War

Congress and the American public were treated to another sales job on Iraq recently that would have made any used car salesman proud. We heard from dark-suited diplomats and starred generals in uniform, and a rehearsed Oval Office speech. They presented their grand vision for a peaceful and prosperous oasis of democracy and stability in the Middle East, if only our gallant soldiers stayed for a little while longer.

As the Senate addresses the Defense Authorization bill, and certainly before the Senate considers yet another war funding supplemental appropriations bill, the cost of the Iraq war should be uppermost in our minds. After all, the White House's grand vision comes with a price tag.

Five years into this misguided war in Iraq, Congress has already appropriated over \$450 billion. If Congress approves President Bush's latest supplemental funding request, the budget will grow to over \$600 billion during Fiscal Year 2008. These direct costs do not cover the many hidden, indirect costs of this war, such as higher Veterans Administration costs and higher oil and gasoline prices. The combined direct and indirect costs and obligations of this war will exceed \$1 trillion by the most con-

servative estimates. Many economists believe that the costs are much higher.

That price tag also does not begin to cover the lost opportunity costs—the ways in which money now spent on Iraq could have been used to make our bridges safer and secure our borders. Nor does that price tag cover the costs of keeping upwards of 130,000 troops in Iraq for the additional years the President and his men suggest will be necessary to achieve their grand vision. It boggles the mind to consider the long-term costs of buying this war.

I am convinced that the best way to support our troops is to bring them home, and the only way to get them home may be to somehow restrict the funds for this disastrous war. We have tried this before but President Bush vetoed the bill. We must try again and attach strings to this money. This Senator will support no more blank checks for Iraq.

We simply cannot afford to buy into another slick White House sales job. Too many young men and women have died or have been maimed in this horrific war. After nearly five years of war, more than 3,800 deaths, over 27,000 casualties, and no end in sight, we must stop blindly funding this lemon of a war and begin to change course.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Cooperation Not Confrontation Key To Movement On Funding Bills

Last week, Congress approved a seven week "continuing resolution" that ensures on-going funding for the entire government while Congress works to complete action on individual appropriations bills. I supported this resolution because I believe the alternative would have been a government shutdown, including operations to protect our homeland and its borders, process Social Security checks, maintain mine safety inspections, and ensure air traffic controllers and federal law enforcement personnel remain on the job.

Unfortunately, we have come to an impasse with the White House in moving forward with the appropriations bills because the President has threatened to veto any bill that exceeds his budget request. These veto threats include all the spending bills that provide funding for our domestic programs -- programs that in one way or another benefit each and every American. These domestic spending bills provide the essential building blocks for the foundations of our great country.

On the one hand, the President is seeking over \$190 billion in emergency appropriations to fight the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet the President wants to veto critical domestic spending bills because they total \$22 billion above his budget request.

While the President characterizes this money as "increased" spending, the

reality is that most of this "increase" simply represents restorations of the President's attempts to savage important domestic initiatives -- law enforcement, first responder grants, education, the National Institutes of Health, and infrastructure repairs to name a few.

This White House stand-off is not over some irresponsible plan for an expansion of government. Rather, it is the President's efforts to prevent cancellation of his ill-conceived budget cuts. There are major consequences for failing to invest in America's safety and future. Hurricane Katrina proved that. The collapse of the I-35 bridge proved that. Increases in violent crime prove that. And increases in food borne illnesses prove that.

Regrettably, rather than recognizing the consequences of his budget, the President is spoiling for a political fight. When President Bush came to town, he vowed to reach across the aisle for the common good of our nation. Now is his chance to make good on that pledge. He can continue his purely partisan fight over \$22 billion in needed funding, or he can work with the Congress to confront the problems that face Americans here at home. It is my hope that the President will put away his veto pen so that we can get on with the business of adequately funding programs that contribute to a safe and prosperous nation.

Oct 3, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Simple Way to Help Protect the Planet

As West Virginians, we are blessed to live in one of the world's most spectacular natural settings. With our state's rolling hills, streams, and meadows, we are inspired every day and instilled with a deep respect for the wonder of God's creation.

In our busy lives, however, many who care about protecting our natural environment are unsure of how to make a contribution. Thankfully, there are simple ways to make a real difference. If each of us makes just a small effort, the collective impact can be considerable.

For instance, most Americans are probably unaware that lighting accounts for close to twenty percent of the typical home's electric usage. The Department of Energy's "ENERGY STAR Change a Light, Change the World" campaign is a national effort to ask every American to play a part in protecting our environment one light at a time.

The program encourages Americans to replace one light or fixture in their home with an energy-efficient ENERGY STAR qualified product. Products that meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of Energy earn the ENERGY STAR. Many major retailers carry qualified light bulbs and fixtures,

which can be identified by their blue ENERGY STAR label. To find out more, go to www.energystar.gov.

Simply replacing one light bulb might not seem like much, but consider the dramatic cumulative effect that would result if everyone in the Mountain State participated.

If each household in West Virginia changed just one incandescent light bulb to an energy star qualified bulb, the state could save up to 38 million kilowatt-hours of electricity per year. This is enough energy to light all the households in Charleston for over 170 days! The amount of energy saved would reduce household electrical bills by a combined total of \$2.4 million a year. Remarkably, West Virginia would prevent the release of over 58 million pounds of greenhouse gas emissions each year.

As you can see, we can all play a part in reducing pollution and greenhouse gases. An act as simple as changing a light bulb can make a real difference.

I believe it is our moral responsibility to act as good stewards of our planet. If we fail, our children and grandchildren will suffer the consequences. I hope that you will each take the time to make this small contribution to the future of our planet. Together, it will pay big dividends for generations to come.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Eastern Panhandle's Growth and Conservation Go Hand-In-Hand

The Eastern Panhandle is one of West Virginia's greatest treasures. The area is a vital part of our state's agricultural and tourism industries, and is home to generations of West Virginia families as well as many newcomers to our state. I have worked hard to protect the historical and cultural heritage of the region, and channel resources to the Eastern Panhandle which have fostered new jobs and investment.

As Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I have added funding to aid in ecological preservation and economic development. The Improved Efficiency of Cool and Cold Water Species/Trout Genome Mapping Project supports research that will help ensure that our streams are filled with healthy aquatic life. My work to develop the National Center for Cool and Cold Water Aquaculture in Leetown, has assisted vital research for the aquaculture industry.

The Appalachian Fruit Research Center in Kearneysville is another endeavor of which I am very proud. To help advance the Center's research efforts, I have provided funds in past appropriations legislation. In the Fiscal Year 2008 Appropriations bill, I included funds to help with repairs and renovations at the facility, and advance its Disease/Insect Control Alternatives Program. This funding aids

apple and pear growers fight fire blight, a destructive bacterial disease.

Across our state, many West Virginians deal with devastating floods and problems with water supply. That is why I have made it a priority to help provide flood protection and protect the water supply in the Eastern Panhandle. The Potomac Headwaters Land Treatment Watershed Project, run by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, helps land owners to implement bacteria and nutrient-reducing techniques in the Potomac River. Additionally, the Lost River Watershed Project provides flood protection, water supply, and recreation to eastern Hardy County.

Throughout the Eastern Panhandle region there are magnificent attractions that draw visitors from all over the world every year. The success of federal and local conservation efforts allows the area to remain home to abundant wildlife and assure access to some of the nation's most pristine landscapes.

With its beauty and economic potential, the Eastern Panhandle's rivers, streams, and farms engender pride in all of us. As long as we continue to conserve the land and make smart investments in the economy, the Eastern Panhandle will continue to be a treasure chest of history and natural wonder for generations to come.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Mountain State Is Home To Groundbreaking Scientific Discoveries

Pocahontas County is home to one of the world's premier astronomical research facilities – the Robert C. Byrd Green Bank Telescope. This telescope and its neighboring national radio observatory work to enhance our knowledge and understanding of the Milky Way galaxy and beyond. Last week, the National Radio Observatory, a National Science Foundation facility that houses the Byrd telescope, celebrated its 50th anniversary.

Dedicated in the summer of 2000, the Byrd telescope has been leading the way in space research. Recently, two teams of scientists announced the discovery of the largest negatively-charged molecule. The molecule was of particular surprise to the scientists because it contains an extra electron, giving the molecule a negative electrical charge. With this exciting information on-hand, astronomers claim that, "there will be a drastic revision of theoretical models of interstellar chemistry."

Prior to the recent finding, scientists at the Byrd Telescope announced in 2002 the groundbreaking discovery of three pulsars. A pulsar is what remains after a star suffers a massive explosion that removes most of its surface. This phenomenon is known as a supernova. By studying these pulsars, scientists are gaining greater insight into the galaxy's growth. Pulsars emit regular pulses of radio

waves that act as a type of "celestial lighthouse." These waves – which are intercepted by the Byrd Telescope – may some day be used by space explorers as lighthouses to navigate our galaxy.

The Byrd telescope had already become the world's champion molecule-finder prior to these discoveries. Using the telescope, scientists discovered eight cosmic molecules in two years – an unmatched achievement. The fact that pulsars were discovered in an already extensively studied part of the sky demonstrates the value of the Byrd telescope. No other telescope has provided such insight into space since the first molecules were discovered in the 1960s.

I have been working to make the resources of the Byrd Telescope available to West Virginia students. In 2002, I secured \$5 million to complete construction of the planetarium and science center at the Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences in Charleston, and for related equipment to link the Clay Center to the Byrd Telescope. This funding has helped to further the educational experience of young people interested in astronomy and the sciences.

I hope that the Byrd telescope will continue to make advances in scientific research, and help spark a greater interest in this exciting field, which has limitless potential for discoveries.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

America Must Not Sleep Walk Into Another Disastrous Military Confrontation

In West Virginia and across the nation, we have reaped the bitter harvest of this Administration's reckless invasion of Iraq. As the President persists undeterred with his hopelessly failed policy in Iraq, the threat of another major conflict in the Middle East looms on the horizon.

Every day now, it seems that the confrontational rhetoric between the United States and Iran continues to escalate. The main point of contention is Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons. While few doubt Iran's desire to attain a nuclear bomb, there is little evidence that they are close to acquiring such a capability.

I am no apologist for the Iranian regime, any more than I was for Saddam Hussein, but I believe that the recent blustering by the Bush Administration does not serve our nation's interests. Rather than pursuing a robust international diplomatic offensive, the Bush Administration is once again pushing the world community aside, pursuing unilateral sanctions, and making threatening statements. We have seen all too clearly where this path leads. We must not pursue it again.

We hear shadowy claims about Iran's destabilizing actions in Iraq, with little proof offered to back them up. Vice President Cheney has threatened "serious consequences" if Tehran does not acquiesce to U.S. demands -- the

exact same phrase used by this Administration in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq. The parallels are unmistakable.

Even more troubling, the President has stated his belief that previously enacted Congressional resolutions grant him all the authority he needs to launch a new war. This is simply not the case. Article One, Section Eight of the United States Constitution vests Congress all power to declare war. No such Presidential authority has been granted.

To make this point crystal-clear, I will be co-sponsoring legislation in the Senate stating that "any offensive military action taken against Iran must be explicitly approved by Congress".

It is incumbent upon this Congress to reassert the powers granted to the people's branch in the Constitution. That is the best way to prevent another colossal blunder in the Middle East. It is the people of this country who pay the price of such presidential misadventures. We, as their representatives in the Congress, must not fail in our number one duty: to protect their interests.

President Bush must understand that the Congress will not stand idly by while his Administration plots another march to war. We must not allow this nation to sleep walk into yet another unnecessary and disastrous conflict.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Helping Families Face Rising Energy Prices

As the low temperatures settle in the mountains and valleys of West Virginia, I am reminded of the beauty that comes with Mountain State winters. But the change of season also means cold nights for many families who cannot afford to heat their homes. The upcoming impact of high oil prices and other energy challenges will test our ability to meet the heating needs of our homes this winter season.

Many West Virginians will be faced with tough choices about whether to use their paychecks to heat their homes, to fill their cars with gasoline, or to buy winter clothes for their children. I believe that it is our government's moral responsibility to help disadvantaged Americans find some relief from the soaring price tag that is attached to home heating costs.

Included in the 2008 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill, is funding for a program that has been helping low-income and elderly families cope with home heating prices. In 1981, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) was established to help those at the lowest income levels meet home energy needs. Currently, more than 100,000 households in West Virginia benefit from the LIHEAP program.

According to the Department of Energy (DOE), home heating oil prices are expected to be 16 percent higher for the 2007-2008 winter compared to last year's winter. While families across the nation are bracing for record home heating costs this winter, President Bush has proposed a \$379 million cut to LIHEAP in his 2008 budget request. Apparently, the President has not visited West Virginia during its coldest months, so he overlooked the fact that winter nights in our state are much colder than those in Texas.

Congress, however, has taken the right steps to help our families cope with skyrocketing home heating costs. We must not stand by and let President Bush leave the most vulnerable in our country out in the cold. Congress has closed the budget gap by approving a \$250 million increase for LIHEAP funding.

When temperatures fall toward the freezing level, families that need home heating assistance may seek help through LIHEAP. In West Virginia, residents can contact the West Virginia central LIHEAP office, which is located in Charleston, by calling 1-800-642-8589.

The sanctuary of a warm home is something to which each and every American should be entitled.

November 7, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Preparing Today to Save Lives Tomorrow

Long before September 11, 2001, the West Virginia National Guard (WVNG) recognized that our federal, state, and first-responder personnel needed to be better prepared to respond to incidents of mass destruction. The WVNG's concept was initially met with some resistance at the Pentagon, especially prior to the horrific attacks of September 11th. However, armed with a solid plan and my efforts to develop state-of-the-art training facilities, the WVNG's vision and early work paid off. In May of 2004, West Virginia was designated by the Chief of the National Guard Bureau as the nation's first National Guard Joint Interagency Training and Education Center (JITEC), dedicated to homeland defense training.

Today, the JITEC is a national level anti-terrorism and homeland security facility based at Camp Dawson in Preston County. The JITEC provides anti-terrorism, counterterrorism, and homeland security training for Department of Defense units, federal and state government agencies, and military and civilian first responders throughout the country. The training and related operational support activities focus on preventing, deterring, and responding to terrorist threats and natural disasters.

The Center for National Response is a key JITEC asset. The former highway tunnel near Standard, West Virginia, is a one-of-a-kind training facility that, since starting operations in De-

ember 2000, has supported over 55,000 man-days of training for military and civilian first responders from around the nation. This unique facility trains military and civilian responders together to improve the coordination of our government's responses to terrorist events, natural disasters, and national emergencies.

Interagency partnership is a cornerstone of the JITEC, having partnered with many federal agencies to develop and implement key national level critical-infrastructure protection programs. JITEC and the West Virginia National Guard also provide support to other agencies for National Security Special Events such as State of the Union addresses, presidential inaugurations, and the Super Bowl. In addition, JITEC supports antiterrorism training at Camp Dawson for the Department of State.

In the realm of homeland defense, the West Virginia National Guard is setting the standard for homeland security training for the rest of America to follow. I am proud to have supported the JITEC concept and to have included the necessary funds to support its mission, such as the construction of the Regional Training Institute at Camp Dawson, and the transformation of the Memorial Tunnel into the Center for National Response. I will continue to work closely with officials of the WVNG, who set a fine example by teaching us that by preparing today, we can save lives tomorrow.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Flu: Nothing To Sneeze At

West Virginians have enjoyed such a temperate autumn that it is hard to imagine that the bitter days of winter are on their way, but on the way they are - bringing ice, snow, and the influenza virus that causes the common, yet debilitating, seasonal flu.

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness. Its symptoms of feverish headaches, aching muscles, and extreme fatigue strike an average of 5% to 20% of the United States population each year.

My mother died of influenza before I reached my first birthday, during the great pandemic of 1918 that took many millions of lives worldwide. Thankfully, modern medicine has equipped us with more effective treatment and prevention of influenza in the years since that terrible epidemic. The flu, however, remains a serious threat to public health, especially to those who have not been vaccinated. Over 200,000 people who fall ill from the flu require hospitalization from complications including dehydration, bacterial pneumonia, and congestive heart failure. Sadly, approximately 36,000 Americans die each year from the flu. Our children, our elderly, and those suffering with compromised immune systems are most susceptible.

The influenza virus is spread from person to per-

son mainly through coughing and sneezing. While covering your cough can ease the spread of the influenza virus, good hygiene is not enough. The best way to prevent getting, and spreading the flu this winter, is to get a flu vaccination. Even when a person is experiencing no flu symptoms, it is still possible for the virus to be passed onto family members, and loved ones. Because the virus changes slightly over time, it is vital that people get a flu vaccination every year.

The West Virginia Bureau of Public Health advises that now is the time for West Virginians to be immunized against this year's influenza virus. Mountaineers seeking flu shots may wish to contact their private physicians or county health departments to obtain information on when and where they can get a flu shot. Veterans may be eligible to obtain free flu shots, and are encouraged to contact their local VA Medical Center or VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic. Likewise, Medicare and Medicaid patients may be eligible for flu shots at a free or reduced rate.

To some this winter, the flu will only be an uncomfortable inconvenience. Tragically for others, the flu will prove to be fatal. Please prepare yourself and your family for the upcoming flu season, and schedule a flu shot today.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A CHANGE OF COURSE IN IRAQ

Recently President Bush requested that Congress provide him -- with no strings attached -- \$196 billion to maintain a presence of some 130,000 U.S. troops in Iraq for a sixth year. The President claims "progress" is being made in Iraq. Like a down-on-his-luck gambler, he wants to keep throwing good money after bad, and keep risking more soldiers' lives, to win his bad bet on Iraq. Remember that President Bush has said that if he had his way, U.S. troops would remain in Iraq long after he leaves office. That is unacceptable. This misguided war must be brought to a close.

It is long past time to limit our military mission in Iraq and bring the bulk of our troops home. We must seriously engage our allies and the nations of the Middle East on Iraqi security issues. It is time to put the United States back on the track that has served us so well in the past -- demonstrating by example how democracies should function, as defenders of human rights, and beacons of hope, strength, and economic prosperity. For most of my lifetime, the world looked to the United States for moral leadership. Now our friends and allies worry about which nation we will invade next. That is how far we have fallen in the eyes of the world. It is long past time to reject

this path, and return to, as President Lincoln so eloquently put it, the better angels of our nature.

Congress cannot continue to act as a rubber stamp, providing endless billions and endangering tens of thousands of lives, for an undefined goal that has succeeded only in undermining U.S. national security and our standing in the world.

The Senate recently attempted to consider a bill that would have provided \$50 billion for continued operations in Iraq, while requiring the President to prepare for the safe and orderly redeployment of our troops consistent with a more limited military mission in Iraq, and in conjunction with regional diplomatic initiatives.

The bill also provided other protections for U.S. troops. These are not onerous strings intended to tie the hands of the President in the conduct of foreign policy. These are sensible provisions that are consistent with America's values and strategic interests.

Unfortunately, the President's friends in the Senate refused to allow the debate to move forward, and blocked the bill. Rest assured that I will continue my efforts to ensure that there will be no more blank checks for this misguided war.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

THE PRESIDENT MUST REMOVE ROADBLOCKS TO HEALTH CARE ACCESS

Recently, President Bush and his friends in Congress demonstrated a startling inability to understand the health care system, and a troubling indifference to the problems of those who cannot access it.

The President began by vetoing an expansion of the hugely successful Children's Health Care Insurance Program (CHIP), legislation that was initiated by my colleague, Senator Jay Rockefeller, D-W. Va. Though a majority of Americans support broadening the CHIP program, the President -- deaf as Ulysses to the sirens' songs -- vetoed a bi-partisan plan to extend basic health care coverage to low-income children. He has also threatened to veto a new plan which covers even more low-income children.

Then, the President dismissed concerns about the rising number of working Americans unable to afford health insurance, by making an extraordinary claim: "No one goes without health care in America. After all, you just go to an emergency room."

Ignoring the disastrous consequences of swamping the nation's emergency rooms with patients seeking non-emergency treatments and care, the President went beyond underestimating the health care problem. He simply denied that one exists.

Working-class Americans know better. They know that denying children

access to health care and denying that a national health care crisis exists will have detrimental consequences for America's health and its economy.

West Virginians know first-hand the disastrous consequences of the current health care system. Residents in rural areas often have to travel long distances to reach the nearest doctor. Not only does this force many to postpone treating medical problems -- often making the prognosis worse -- it further drains the pocketbooks of those who can least afford it.

While President Bush has been a free-wheeling military spender, he has been ruthlessly "penny-wise" on many domestic issues. While he is eager to pour billions into military adventurism abroad, American children have lost their health insurance and veterans' hospitals like Walter Reed have fallen into disrepair. While President Bush is ready to spend billions of American tax dollars to build roads and schools and hospitals in Iraq, our own country's health care, education, and infrastructure are at the top of his hit list for spending cuts.

By any measure, President Bush's priorities do not match those of the American public. Our people need to demand that their needs be met. It is past time for this White House to get its priorities straight.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A HOLIDAY MESSAGE TO OUR TROOPS AND THEIR FAMILIES

During this Holiday season, over 200,000 young American men and women are serving our country in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many have been deployed overseas before, or will spend their second consecutive Christmas in a battle zone rather than gathered around a Christmas tree with friends and family. For our troops, the holiday season will be rather spartan, spent in uniform, patrolling dangerous streets, and overlaid with an ever present watchfulness that comes from living on the front lines.

In living rooms across the country, candles glow, carols sound, and the scent of pine boughs and Christmas baking fills the air. But many families will be missing a treasured family member around their Christmas table. Their holiday pictures will be missing a smiling face, who will instead be wearing a helmet over their body armor and combat fatigues. The soldiers and their families will put on a brave face, but the strain and loneliness are very real. No care package or telephone call can ever replace the warm hugs of a loving family. And nothing can fill the ache of families who have lost a loved one in combat.

Throughout our nation's history, the members of our

armed forces have served willingly and tirelessly overseas so that we might enjoy the peace won through their sacrifice. Our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, and elsewhere around the globe, add to this distinguished history of courage and service. In this season of love and light, song and laughter, we owe to them our heartfelt thanks and our commitment that we will never take their service for granted.

While this holiday season may be marked by an intense debate between Congress and the White House over our military commitment in Iraq, no one who wears the uniform of this country should ever doubt the American people's gratitude to them and their families for the sacrifices they have made and continue to make every day. I want each of them to know that I have no greater wish for the New Year than their safe return home. And for their families, I pray for strength and comfort as you struggle through the holidays -- and every day -- without a loved one. You are always in my thoughts and prayers.

And with the thanks of a grateful nation, may you share in an abundance of God's blessings during this Christmas season and the coming New Year.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Christmas Spirit is Alive and Well in West Virginia

It is my Christmas wish that we all keep more of the Christmas spirit with us throughout the coming year. Charles Dickens said it best: "I will hold Christmas in heart and try to keep it all the year."

Christmas is a time of peace, and a celebration of the birth of Jesus, whose message of love for His fellow man included tolerance, kindness, and humility. These days, it takes effort to carve out enough time and energy from the ceaseless march of consumerism to find the true spirit of Christmas. Thankfully, that spirit is still alive and well even amid all of the bright lights and holiday parties. The true spirit of Christmas can be seen in the piles of canned goods donated to food banks. It is alive and well in the generous responses to 'angel trees', which allow the fulfillment of the Christmas wishes of children in need. The message of the birth and life of Jesus thrives in the music sung by Christmas choirs in magnificent performances.

Each Christmas season, inspiring choir renditions of favorite carols can be heard throughout the churches of West Virginia. There are

few things more uplifting than coming out of an evening church service, buoyed up by the sweet melodies of traditional music, accompanied by a host of stars sparkling like diamonds across the nighttime sky. All the carols we learned as children, in church or around the family piano, resonate in our memories – the three kings following the "Yonder Star," the stars shining brightly on that Holy night, the manger in Bethlehem, and the Holy mother and child on that silent night. Each year, these images rise anew from the deep well of childhood, bringing with them fond images of happy times and family members dear to our hearts.

This year, many families will look to the stars and hear the music of the season and know that far across the globe, their loved ones gaze up at those same stars remembering home and the Christmas story. For our troops especially, we pray for peace, and their speedy return to the loving arms of their families.

May you share in an abundance of God's blessings in this Holy Christmas season and in the New Year.

December 19, 2007



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Fighting the Scourge of Methamphetamine Addiction

Methamphetamine or “meth” is a highly addictive drug that has destroyed many lives in West Virginia and throughout the country. In 2005, I cosponsored the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act, which limited sales of medicines containing pseudoephedrine (PSE) and other chemicals used to make methamphetamine, and required that the chemicals be placed behind pharmacy counters. It also mandated that pharmacies keep a written or electronic log of their sales. The West Virginia Legislature passed a similar law that same year.

According to the U.S. Drug and Enforcement Administration, the discovery of clandestine meth labs in West Virginia peaked in 2005 at 213, and declined to 83 in 2006, largely as the result of the new state and federal laws regulating chemicals used to make the drug.

However, meth remains a serious problem in our state. Consequently, I recently cosponsored S. 2071, the Combat Methamphetamine Enhancement Act, which seeks to strengthen the earlier legislation. For example, the 2005 Act required pharmacists to file “self-certifications” that said their personnel had been trained about the law’s requirements, including behind-the-counter storage, logbook entries, and limits on sales. Unfortunately, thousands of the chemicals’ retail sellers have not yet self-certified, and it is difficult to iden-

tify non-complying stores. The 2007 bill is designed to improve self-certification by requiring sellers of chemicals used to make methamphetamine to file self-certifications with the Attorney General. It also requires that the Attorney General publish a list of all self-certified persons on the Drug Enforcement Agency website; it restricts distributors of the listed chemicals from selling to anyone other than self-certified sellers; and it imposes penalties for any negligent failure to self-certify.

I have also provided funding for the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) in West Virginia. The HIDTA program coordinates drug control efforts among local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. It provides the agencies with equipment, technology, and other resources to combat illegal drug activity throughout Appalachia.

Since 2001, I have also provided funds for the West Virginia National Guard (WVNG) Counterdrug Program, which completed over 106 missions during FY 2007. The missions resulted in 500 arrests and the seizure of drugs and assets worth \$78.8 million.

I share West Virginians’ deep concern about the drug problem in our state. I pledge to continue to sponsor legislation that will enhance awareness, promote drug treatment, and provide law enforcement with the tools it needs to fight drug crime.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

CONGRESS DELIVERS ON AMERICA'S PRIORITIES

The Constitution grants to Congress an extensive array of power, each of which, in one way or another, touches the lives of every one of the 300 million people who live in America today. But of all those powers none is so powerful -- or so necessary for the welfare of our country -- as the power to appropriate money from our treasury.

But it is not simply within the power of Congress to appropriate funds for the operation of the government. It is a duty that must be exercised each year, without fail, without excuses. The operation of the government -- to enforce our laws, to serve our people, to protect our liberties -- depends upon Congress providing the funds necessary to do so.

Congress has done just that. We have passed and the President has signed into law a funding bill totaling \$555 billion for operations relating to nearly every agency in the Federal government, and which restores many of the President's ill begotten spending cuts.

A key priority in this bill is increased funding for the Veterans Administration, for veterans health care and for the hiring of more VA personnel to reduce a six month backlog of benefit claims.

With energy prices going through the roof, a significant increase in funding

over the President's budget request has been designated for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which will provide 2 million families with additional help for winter heating bills.

Despite the fact that violent crime is on the rise for the first time in fifteen years, the President attempted to cut State and local law enforcement. The Congress restored \$1.2 billion of the proposed cut.

The measure also makes education a top priority by increasing Head Start by \$114 million, stopping a proposed cut of 30,000 slots for early childhood education. And for college students, Pell Grants are increased to \$4,731 per year.

Plans to eliminate or slash numerous programs for our rural communities, such as rural health, rural housing, and clean water programs, were scuttled.

And at my direction, the bill included a \$20 million increase above the President's request for mine safety for a total of \$334 million. This money will help save lives.

The Democratic Congress understands that there are consequences for our failure to invest in America and the American people. And as Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I will continue to stand up for the priorities of the people of West Virginia and all Americans.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A NEW DIRECTION IN PROTECTING THE HOMELAND

In February 2007, I wrote in this space that despite President Bush's talk about his concern for the safety of Americans at home, his rhetoric was as hollow as a ten gallon hat. The President's budget request for 2008 homeland security programs proposed more than \$2.6 billion in cuts to our nation's homeland security initiatives. Programs funding Law Enforcement Terrorism Protection, Firefighter Assistance Grants, and Community Oriented Policing Services all faced dramatic cuts at a time of increasing concern that terrorists were once again plotting to attack our shores.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security and Chairman of the full Senate Appropriations Committee, I made it a priority of the Committee this past year to reverse these misguided cuts and better protect this country from future terrorist attacks.

I am pleased to say that when President Bush signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008 in late December, it signaled a new direction in funding to protect our homeland. The Democratic Congress restored the significant cuts sought by the President to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and improved efforts to secure our nation's borders.

When Congress sent this bill to the President, we

made it clear that DHS must be both nimble and have the resources necessary to effectively respond to evolving threats. We reversed the President's unfortunate attempt to secure the homeland on the cheap.

In October 2006, President Bush signed the SAFE Port Act yet he requested no funds to implement it. In July 2007, the Administration issued a National Intelligence Estimate that concluded that Al-Qaeda had reconstituted itself in Pakistan with the intent of attacking America again. Then, unbelievably the President proposed cutting grants which equip and train our first responders by \$1.5 billion. And in August 2007, he signed the 9/11 Commission Implementation Act and requested no resources to implement it. Signing ceremonies alone will never secure our borders or enforce our immigration laws. It takes money to implement these goals.

As the recent events in Pakistan remind us, the world is a very dangerous place. The Congress did its part to provide necessary funds to train and employ the border patrol agents and first responders who are our first line of defense against unforeseen attack. Now the President has signed that legislation into law, establishing a clear new direction for the Department of Homeland Security, and ensuring that American lives are not put needlessly at risk.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Building for the Future

In 1947, when I began my public service in the West Virginia House of Delegates, there were only four miles of divided, four-lane highway in West Virginia. Needless to say, travel within West Virginia at that time was slow and extremely dangerous. Commerce stalled and lives were lost because our road and highway system was, as the Saturday Evening Post noted in February 1960, "decades behind that of its neighbors."

We have come a long way since 1947. I have worked hard throughout my career to fund the Appalachian Development Highway System and other critical road projects in our state.

But there is still much work to do. This year, I designated \$41 million in federal funding specifically for West Virginia highways, increasing West Virginia's total highway funding to a total of \$356.1 million. I fought for these dollars because I know they will bring real benefits for West Virginians -- safer roads, new jobs, and economic growth for communities in need of modern highways.

The Corridor highways, and four-lane highways in general, generate economic growth in the communities they traverse.

That is why I have made it a priority to com-

plete West Virginia's Corridor Highways. Our state is set to receive \$102 million this year for construction of the Appalachian Corridor Highways, including \$15.7 million that I added. With the Corridor D bypass scheduled for completion this spring, the only unfinished corridor highway in West Virginia will be Corridor H -- planned to stretch from I-79 at Weston through the Potomac Highlands to the Virginia state line. Now that we are close to completing work on all of our other corridors, these new investments will mean more progress on this vital project.

I have also boosted funding for other important projects throughout the state, including: \$3.9 million for the Coalfields Expressway; \$3.9 million for the King Coal Highway; \$7.5 million for West Virginia Route 2 in the Northern Panhandle; \$7.8 million for Route 9 in the Eastern Panhandle; and \$1.9 million for an access road from the Morgantown airport to I-68.

The progress we have seen in West Virginia roads and highways over the last half-century has been truly remarkable. As every West Virginian knows, however, there is always more to do. I will continue to look for opportunities which benefit West Virginia's highways in the year ahead.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Tax Credit for Working West Virginians

Each year, many working West Virginians qualify for tax breaks but they simply don't take advantage of them. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC), are federal tax benefits created to offset Social Security taxes and to help people keep their jobs and care for their families.

The EITC can be worth up to \$4,716 for families who worked in 2007. Workers raising children who earned less than about \$38,000 in 2007 may be eligible for the EITC. Additionally, workers not raising children who earned less than around \$13,000 can qualify.

Along with the EITC, some families are also eligible to receive the CTC, which can be worth up to \$1,000 per child. While the credits are offset by the amount of income taxes workers owe – even workers who owe no taxes may qualify for the credits.

To claim the credits, eligible workers must file a tax return. While filing may seem overwhelming or complicated, there are organizations in West Virginia called Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) to help prepare tax returns. VITAs offer free tax preparation and assistance to

qualifying workers. Volunteers help to educate taxpayers about the EITC, including qualifying for and claiming the credit.

Taxpayer Assistance Centers will be open for Saturday hours on February 2nd, 9th, and 16th to help EITC taxpayers who may not be able to seek assistance during the work week. The Huntington site, located at 845 Fifth Avenue, will be open from 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. The Charleston site, located at 1206 Quarrier Street, will be open from 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Other free EITC return preparation options include Free File (www.irs.gov) - for taxpayers with internet access. Online filing is available. Taxpayers can also find local Volunteer Assistance sites by calling 1-800-829-1040 or visiting www.wveitc.com.

It is estimated that 15 to 20 percent of eligible workers do not claim their EITC. That means millions of dollars are not making it into the pockets of eligible Americans, including thousands in West Virginia. West Virginians should seek assistance at tax time. They are entitled to the tax breaks in the law which can ease the strain on the family budget.

January 23, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

THE UNFORTUNATE STATE OF OUR UNION

President Bush this past week delivered his seventh and final State of the Union Address to the American people. While he painted a picture of America's economy, and our role in the international community in bold brush strokes, I was not looking through the same rose-colored glasses as the President. I believe that our nation's ship of state lies berthed in drydock and is in desperate need of repair. With reports that United States' economic growth is the weakest in five years, concern has increased over President Bush's failed economic policies.

When President Bush entered office in 2001, we had a budget surplus and our country was on its way to eliminating much of its public debt. Since that time, the American people have watched as this Administration has not only squandered that surplus but has also created three of the largest deficits in the history of our nation.

President Bush has added more than \$3.5 trillion to the debt owed by our government to its creditors. He has accomplished this by championing massive tax cuts for the very wealthy at the expense of hard working West Virginia families and the health of America's economy. The President has demanded over \$500 billion for his war in Iraq and every penny has been borrowed.

And, he once again blindly asked the Congress to make those tax cuts permanent, with no concern for the financial burdens this would inflict on our children and grandchildren.

Before our very eyes, our President is auctioning off our economy to the highest bidder. He has presided over an economy that has shipped good-paying American jobs overseas. And President Bush has sat idly by during most of the past year as the home mortgages of hard working American families have been bought by foreign creditors. Literally, the roofs over the heads of many Americans are owned by foreigners.

It is extraordinary that President Bush -- who continues to squander billions of dollars every week in Iraq -- presumes to lecture Congress on its stewardship of taxpayer dollars. He fails to understand that there are consequences for our failure to invest in America. The American people want their hard-earned tax dollars to be spent on priorities here at home -- on homeland security, clean water, bridges, and roads -- not on a disastrous nation-building adventure halfway around the world.

It is time to right our ship of state, make the drastic needed repairs, and set sail for a brighter economic future.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

FINAL BUSH BUDGET MORE OF THE SAME

Last week, President Bush submitted the final budget of his presidency to Congress. Once again we saw a replay of his previous budget requests - - deficits, deception, and demagoguery.

The Bush budget mortgages our children's and grandchildren's future through massive federal budget deficits, while short-changing critical domestic priorities. In fiscal year 2000, America had a budget surplus of \$236 billion. The President's fiscal year 2009 budget now projects a budget deficit of \$407 billion. This Administration has racked up three of the largest deficits in the history of our nation, and President Bush's FY 2009 budget could yield yet another record deficit. It appears that lip service will be this President's legacy on fiscal discipline.

While President Bush has been adding to our deficit dilemma, he continues to rob Peter to pay Paul by taking critical funds from essential domestic programs for his disastrous war and nation-building misadventure in Iraq.

For West Virginia families, the Bush budget is a bad deal. It cuts federal housing programs, despite widespread recognition that our nation's economy is in a housing crisis. Huge cuts will endanger access to quality health care for West Virginia's 600,000 Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries. More than 9,000 West Virginians living with invasive cancer and 10% of adults

who have been diagnosed with diabetes will have their health care and medical research jeopardized.

Under the Bush plan, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which helps families heat their homes in the winter, will be slashed. And the budget assaults local crime fighting efforts - - the Community Oriented Policing Service (COPS) and the Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) programs -- because both programs are zeroed out.

The Mine Safety and Health Administration's budget will be slashed by \$10 million, which is absolutely absurd in light of the disasters at Sago and other mines and the safety concerns for our brave miners which need to be addressed. In an unfortunate and short-sighted move, which smacks of raw politics, the President proposes to eliminate the Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship program, thus slamming shut the door of opportunity for thousands of our nation's most promising students who need help to pay for their college tuition.

I had hoped that after almost eight years in office, President Bush would finally recognize the need to invest in the priorities of the American people. It is clear that dog will never hunt. However, you can be assured that I will continue to stand up to the President's misplaced priorities and fight for the needs of West Virginians and the American people.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Early Action is Key to Ensuring Your Child's Eye and Vision Health

One of the great responsibilities of parents is to ensure the health of their infant. Managing this task can be overwhelming, especially for those families who are already struggling to make ends meet. To help working families afford critical eye care for their newborn, there is a program called InfantSEE. This eye and vision health program makes it affordable to monitor an infant during their first year of development and offers early detection of potential eye and vision problems.

Good eyesight contributes immeasurably to the quality of one's life. It allows us to witness memorable events in the world, enjoy countless books, and see the beautiful faces of dear family and friends. But for more than 10 million children in the United States suffering from undetected vision problems, the gift of good eyes may be elusive.

The InfantSEE program provides a variety of services including: no-cost access to an eye-care doctor who has the instruments and resources not available to general-care doctors like pediatricians and family physicians; detects potential problems that, if undetected, may lead to learning and developmental issues later; and gives new parents the peace of mind that their

infant's vision is developing properly.

Through InfantSEE, optometrists will provide a one-time, comprehensive eye assessment to infants in their first year of life, offering early detection of potential eye and vision problems. In the 2008 Consolidated Appropriations bill, I added \$431,330 for InfantSEE that will help this program continue to provide its important services.

InfantSEE encourages parents to take their children to an eye doctor early in life, when many vision problems might be prevented or more easily corrected. That is the key to preventing long-term eye and vision problems. A doctor's assessment between six and 12 months of age can help determine whether an infant is at risk for eye or vision disorders.

Many disorders of the eye can only be identified by a doctor in the infant's first year of life. Working parents can guard their children's eyesight by seeking an InfantSEE assessment, and a wellness evaluation of the eyes performed by a pediatrician or family practice doctor.

I encourage parents to take advantage of InfantSEE. To learn more about the program, visit "<http://www.infantsee.org>" www.infantsee.org or call (800) 365-2219.

February 13, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Celebrating the Founder of Black History Month

February is Black History Month. In February our country recognizes and honors the countless contributions that African-Americans have made to our American history and culture. What is less well known is that the founder of Black History Month was a West Virginian – our own Carter G. Woodson.

Woodson, the son of slaves, was actually born in New Canton, Virginia, but at an early age, he moved to West Virginia in order to attend Douglass High School in Huntington. He financed his education by working as a coal miner in Fayette County.

After receiving his Bachelor of Literature degree from Berea College in Kentucky, Woodson taught school from 1897 to 1900 in Fayette County. In 1900, he became the principal of Douglass High School, and later served as Dean of West Virginia State College in Institute, WV.

In 1908, Carter G. Woodson received his Master's Degree from the University of Chicago and in 1912 he was awarded his Ph.D. in history from Harvard University.

As he studied, Woodson realized that the role of African-Americans in American history had been largely ignored or misrepresented. "Those who have no record of what their forebears have accomplished," he wrote,

"lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history." Maintaining that African-Americans must know their past in order to participate intelligently in the affairs of our country, he set out on a course that would eventually lead him to be known as the "Father of Black History."

More than six decades before there was anything resembling a course on Black Studies, Woodson had authored numerous scholarly books on African-American History, including, *The Negro in our History* and *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. In 1915, he helped establish the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. The following year, he began publishing the influential *Journal of Negro History*, now one of the oldest learned journals in the United States.

In 1926, Woodson launched "Negro History Week" which was eventually expanded to "Black History Month."

Carter G. Woodson often said that he hoped the time would come when all Americans would easily recognize the contributions of Black Americans as a legitimate and integral part of the History of the USA, so that Negro History Week would not be necessary. We may not be there yet, but with the work and efforts of scholars like Woodson, we are well on our way.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Free Trade is Still Not Fair Trade

In early February, the U.S. Labor Department reported that, for the first time in nearly two-and-a-half years, the American economy lost jobs. Unfortunately, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve delivered an even less comforting Valentine's Day message before the Senate Banking Committee. He predicted a further drop in home building, with more job losses, higher energy prices, and diminished home values – all of which will cause consumer spending to decline. At the same time, he noted that inflation has increased as the result of soaring prices for both oil and food.

The Bush Administration's seven years of neglectful fiscal and trade policies have left America's working families in the lurch. The President's myopic obsession with funding the Iraq war has taken the focus off of our country's economic needs and permitted the forces of globalization to gut our middle class. While the Bush Administration pours billions of dollars into the sieve in Iraq, the White House mindlessly beats the drums for misguided free trade agreements (FTAs) here at home. These FTAs make it easier for U.S. corporations to move offshore and ship goods back into the United States duty-free. Overseas, U.S. companies produce goods with cheap labor not subject to stringent health, safety, labor, or environmental standards. According to reports, since

2001, an estimated 830,000 white-collar jobs have been sent overseas.

As I have said for decades, free trade is not always fair trade. The lengthy string of FTAs enacted over the past 14 years, including NAFTA, CAFTA, the U.S.-Morocco FTA, and the U.S.-PERU FTA, have done little to benefit West Virginia. Instead, they have increased the strength of multinational corporations, which view outsourcing and profit, rather than people, as their top priority. These corporations have not used the profit they have obtained by using cheap labor overseas to reinvest in America. Instead, wages in the United States have stagnated, and manufacturing employment continues to decline. Seventy percent of workers in America now recognize that their income is not keeping up with their cost of living. This cannot continue.

America must refrain from creating FTAs and start providing incentives for companies to remain in the United States. We should insist that corporate chieftains invest a higher percentage of their company's profit in local communities, rather than in ballooning executive salaries. We need to provide America's working families with economic security, while encouraging innovation and greater investments in education. By doing so, we will ensure a brighter future for workers in West Virginia and across our great nation.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Waste, Fraud, and Abuse in Iraq

As America's massive military and nation-building effort in Iraq continues with no end in sight, the cost to the American taxpayers is piling up at a staggering rate. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the cumulative cost of the war is expected to reach \$608 billion by the end of the year.

Here are some statistics to help put the enormity of \$608 billion in perspective. It is over \$2000 for every man, woman and child in America. It is approximately 120 times what President Bush has requested in his 2009 budget to fund the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency. According to NASA, \$608 billion could purchase 355 Space Shuttles.

The massive price tag for the war can be traced in part to the widespread waste, fraud, and abuse in Iraq. From the very beginning, huge sums of taxpayer dollars have lined the pockets of greedy contractors, whose work goes undone or poorly done. Money, weapons, and oil profits have apparently been delivered directly to insurgents and militias in Iraq. Large sums of cash have simply disappeared.

Meanwhile, stories of rampant corruption within Iraqi cities have become commonplace. A local Iraqi

businessman told a reporter, "I'd say that about 10 per cent of business was corrupt under Saddam. Now, it's about 95 per cent. We used to have one Saddam, now we have 25 of them."

To add to our budgetary woes, troop levels are not projected to decrease any time soon. The Pentagon now says that 140,000 of our troops will remain in Iraq even after the troop surge has concluded. Clearly, this budgetary comet will only continue its meteoric rise.

We must not settle for more feeble excuses and deceptions. There is simply not a serious enough effort underway to crack down on contract fraud and to pressure the governments in Iraq and Afghanistan to clean up their acts.

That is why, as Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I will be holding hearings to demand answers from the Administration on the widespread waste, fraud, and abuse that continues to take place in Iraq.

This is not a partisan political issue. Every American should demand that their government serve as a good steward of their taxpayer dollars. It is our common responsibility to determine the scope and scale of the problem, and go about fixing it. That is exactly what I intend to do.

March 5, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Fire Department Funding is Central to our Homeland Security

Across the nation, there are men and women who put their lives on the line every day fighting fires. From house fires to chemical spills to bioterrorism threats, they, along with their colleagues in law enforcement, are the first at the scene.

While public attention has finally focused on the role that firefighters and emergency responders play in our overall homeland defense efforts, these silent heroes have always understood their mission.

As American life has become more complicated, the firefighter's job description has only gotten longer. The jobs of firefighting and emergency response have become increasingly complex and dangerous. The nationwide increase in the use of hazardous materials and the recent rise in both natural and man-made disasters pose new threats to firefighters and emergency workers. Often, they perform their duties without proper equipment, training, and staffing. But they do it anyway, and we are all better off for their bravery.

In this high technology, post-9/11 world, firefighters deserve the latest equipment and training to effectively deal with changing threats. We are safer, individually and collectively, with properly equipped and trained firefighters. Because the safety and security of our communities is dependent upon the capabilities of our firefighters, I believe that it is wise to invest federal dollars in this effort.

That is why I have fought the Bush Administration's misguided attempts to cut funding for fire grants. Our fire departments should not have to struggle to pay for the training that makes the dangerous job of fighting fire easier.

As Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, I have worked to restore funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG), which provides equipment and training for these courageous public servants. The 2007 AFG program will award more than \$490 million in critical grant funds to fire departments in big cities and small towns across the country.

I have insisted on the restoration of severe budget cuts for staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grants (SAFER) which provide grant funding to fire departments for recruitment and retention. Although the Administration sought to eliminate SAFER grants, I am proud that approximately \$115 million will be awarded to fire departments through the program in 2007. We must not be penny-wise and pound foolish.

When it comes to protecting our communities and giving our firefighters the training and tools they need to succeed, cutting corners is unacceptable. We must do all we can to provide our firefighters with the best resources available.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

SPRINGTIME AND EASTER

As many of you know, I took a nasty little fall at my home recently. Fortunately, I only gave my back a good wrench, but my family and doctors insisted on a lot of care and physical therapy, which was both therapeutic and frustrating. I do not like being poked, prodded, or cajoled any more than the next person, especially after beginning to feel better and ready to return to work. Nevertheless, the rest did let me spend a little time staring out of the windows, watching the beauty of springtime begin to steal across the landscape.

March 20th, the first day of spring this year, is the day that marks the Last Supper between Jesus and his disciples, the evening before the crucifixion on Good Friday, and the miracle of resurrection on Easter Sunday. It is fitting that the dawning of the spring and the resurrection of Christ occur in such close conjunction. Both events celebrate renewal and rebirth and the awakening of new life. The dawning of spring brings a sense of restored health and energy that enhances our appreciation of the miracle of the Easter season and its promise of eternal life.

As Christians moved through the liturgical calendar of Easter, observing and commemorating great

events of two millennia past, the occupants of the northern hemisphere also counted down the days until spring.

In these early warm and fragrant days, we can most fully appreciate the beauty of the season, in contrast to the cold and wet weather of recent weeks. With each trumpeting daffodil, each nodding crocus, each arching branch of yellow forsythia, and each dainty petal of blooming pear and cherry tree, we find the cheerful evidence of the approaching season.

In the ever-lengthening evening light, we spy the house wren flitting about as she seeks a sheltered spot to build her nest. We hear, clear and strong, the first evening chorus of frogs, a song that will be lost in the background noise later in the season. But these few weeks, we hear it 'a capella,' unaccompanied by the hum of air conditioners on hot summer evenings.

Each sign of spring, each glory of the Easter-tide, is a gift from the Creator, a promise made to each of us that there is life after death and stunning beauty after the dark days of winter. I hope the people of West Virginia will step outside and revel in the glory of God as they enjoy the fragile beauty of spring.

March 19, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

4000 SOULS

Last week marked the fifth anniversary of the start of our nation's invasion of Iraq. Again we are confronted with a sorrowful reminder of the consequences of that fateful decision by the death of four Americans killed in Baghdad, bringing the total number of American troops who have made the ultimate sacrifice in Iraq to 4000. Each brave soul leaves behind devastated loved ones -- sons, daughters, wives, husbands, moms, and dads. Each tragic loss leaves a void -- a missing smile and loving embrace, an empty chair at the family dinner table -- that can never be filled.

As we mark this painful milestone, we must ask ourselves: what is the moral justification for allowing this war to continue? Can we honestly say that the disastrous mission in Iraq warrants the sacrifice of more of our troops and the heartache and loss that so many loved ones continue to suffer?

In March of 2003, just prior to the invasion of Iraq, I made a final plea to the Administration and my colleagues in Congress to avert a war that I believed would reap sorrowful consequences for our nation. In a speech entitled "We Stand Passively Mute", I expressed my outrage at the fact that the United States Senate -- the world's greatest deliberative body -- stood "for the most part-

silent-ominously, dreadfully silent" on this monumental question.

Sadly, my worst fears have been realized. The decision to invade Iraq may go down as one of the gravest foreign policy blunders in our nation's history.

Yet the war continues. American troop levels are higher than they were the day President Bush flamboyantly swooped onto the deck of the aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln* to declare "Mission Accomplished."

Four thousand Americans have now lost their lives, including twenty-three brave West Virginians. Almost thirty-thousand Americans have been wounded in action, many gravely, and countless thousands of Iraqi civilians have been killed.

It is long past time to start bringing our troops home. Our men and women in uniform toppled the dictator. There were no weapons of mass destruction. There is scarce evidence that the Iraqi government is working to achieve the kind of political reconciliation that could end the continuing sacrifice of our brave men and women.

At this somber moment, let us resolve to take steps to finally bring this tragic war to an end. In 2008, the American people must not stand passively mute, as far too many of their leaders did five years ago. Let your voices be heard

March 26, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

David Hunter Strother: A Life and Career Worth Recalling

The Monongahela National Forest is an incredible wilderness area of rugged landscapes and spectacular views. Within this forest are two of the highest mountain peaks in our state, including Spruce Knob, the highest peak in our state, and Mount Porte Crayon, the sixth highest. Known for its strong winds and inclement weather, Mount Porte Crayon is named after a great West Virginian who was one of the most widely known U.S. authors and artists of his time, but, unfortunately, is little remembered today. His is a life and career worth recalling.

David Hunter Strother was born in Martinsburg on September 26, 1816. As a young man, he studied art in Philadelphia, New York City, and Rome.

For a while, Strother worked as an artist for *The Crayon*, the leading art journal of his time. Because so much of his early work consisted of landscapes and other outdoor scenes, he helped illustrate travelogues, and became a frequent contributor to *Harper's Monthly Magazine*.

In 1853, Strother wrote and illustrated an article on Canaan Valley that was published in *Harper's* under his pen name, Porte Crayon. The article proved immensely popular and earned him considerable renown, making Porte Crayon a household name across the country.

During the Civil War, the Union army commissioned Porte Crayon as a staff officer. Because of his artistic abilities and detailed knowledge of the Shenandoah Valley, he was assigned as a topographer to various generals. He rose to the rank of Brigadier General and served as a war correspondent for *Harper's*.

After the war, *Harper's* published Porte Crayon's powerful and influential recollections of the war and his ten-part series titled, "The Mountains," which introduced America to the new State of West Virginia, its people, and its culture. In 1879, President Rutherford B. Hayes appointed Strother to be General Consul to Mexico City.

But after a few years, he returned to the hills of West Virginia where he edited a newspaper and worked to convince the state's leaders to invest in the infrastructure essential to the state's economic well-being. Porte Crayon died in Charles Town on March 8, 1888 – 120 years ago.

Today, he is largely forgotten by people in our state, except when a dedicated hiker ventures through the Monongahela National Forest and comes across Mount Porte Crayon – a worthy reminder of the man who contributed so much to the history and culture of our state.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

U.S. FOREIGN POLICY MUST MOVE BEYOND AN IRAQ-ONLY FOCUS

To date, the national debate over the Iraq War has focused almost entirely on the enormous human and financial costs of the conflict. The human costs have been heartbreaking -- more than 4000 Americans have lost their lives and nearly 30,000 have been wounded. The financial costs have been staggering -- nearly half a trillion dollars to date.

Less attention has been paid to the dire strategic consequences of this misbegotten, seemingly endless war. By undermining our military readiness and detracting from other national security priorities around the globe -- particularly Afghanistan and Pakistan -- President Bush's open-ended commitment in Iraq has made the world more dangerous, and our nation less secure.

Recently, I joined with colleagues in the Senate in writing to the President to express our collective view on this subject. An excerpt follows:

"Repeated and extended deployments to Iraq have greatly strained our military's capabilities. Readiness has sunk to levels not seen since Vietnam. Units do not have enough time at home to achieve through training the full-spectrum combat capabilities on which our security depends. We have no ready reserve for an unexpected crisis. We must begin immediately to restore the readiness of

our Army and Marine Corps by returning to 12 month deployments, and providing active and reserve units sufficient time at home between deployments to retrain and reequip."

"For too long, this Administration has treated Southwest Asia as an afterthought, even as it committed more U.S. troops and treasure to the war in Iraq. The neglect of Afghanistan and Pakistan reflects a failure to recognize this region as the central battlefield in the war against al Qaeda.

"An al Qaeda attack on the U.S. homeland would likely originate in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region...Our nation cannot afford to stand by while the danger to the region—and to America—grows stronger day by the day."

I fear that our plea will fall on deaf ears, as has too often been the case with this President. As Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I will continue to press for accountability and oversight on the increasing costs and devastating consequences that the current strategy is having on our national security posture. And Congress must prepare for the smoothest possible transition for the next President. For it is the next President who will be charged with the daunting task of setting a new, wiser course that will truly make our nation and the world a safer place.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

MONEY FOR IRAQ BUT A BIG "NO" FOR MONEY FOR AMERICA

By the end of 2008, the war in Iraq will have cost the United States taxpayers a whopping \$600 billion. Over 4,000 U.S. service members have died, and over 30,000 U.S. service members have been wounded. In the next few weeks, the Senate Appropriations Committee, which I chair, will consider the President's request for Congress to approve yet another \$108 billion of emergency funding, mostly for this endless war in Iraq. We will consider the President's request at a time when the U.S. economy is, by most accounts, in serious trouble.

A careful review of President Bush's request reveals no evidence of funding to bolster our country's economy or to help Americans deal with lost jobs, mortgage foreclosures, and the rising cost of living. There is no money to address our crumbling infrastructure, high home heating oil costs, or nutrition programs for infants and children. Yet, the President has thrown down the gauntlet and threatens to veto the supplemental bill if the Congress has the temerity to add one dime to his request in order to help our citizens cope with the situation here at home.

What a contrast to the President's request for as-

sistance for Iraq! We have already poured \$45 billion of our citizens' hard-earned tax dollars into reconstruction projects in Iraq, projects that have done little to promote political reconciliation. That is 45 billion American dollars gifted to Iraq, despite the fact that the Iraqi government is running a huge surplus due to its excess oil revenues!

Now, the President is asking this Congress to shovel yet another \$3 billion of American taxpayer dollars for more rebuilding projects in Iraq. Well, I say charity begins at home!

The President wants money to build schools in Sadr City, but not in Seattle. Why does he demand money for roads in Ramadi, but nothing for Richmond? The President wants money for Mosul, but not one dime for Minneapolis. Why is he determined to reconstruct Baghdad, but not Baltimore, Biloxi, or Birmingham?

We must also invest in our own economy and take care of our people here at home. To fail to do so will only further dampen our economy, work a hardship on our citizens, and deplete our ability to pay these endless, ever-climbing requests for more money to fund this war in Iraq. The well is running dry, and it is time to prime the pump.

April 16, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

FREE COUPONS PRESERVE MUST-SEE TV!

The Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act, enacted in 2005, requires that all American television stations stop broadcasting in analog and switch to 100 percent digital broadcasting after February 17, 2009. Analog uses radio frequency waves to transmit pictures and sound, while digital broadcasting uses a more efficient method of transmitting information using computer code. The switch to digital will make additional airwaves available for emergency responders, and hopefully will provide a clearer picture and more programming options.

Homeowners who have cable, satellite, or other pay television services, will not be negatively affected by the change to digital broadcasting. However, those who do not have cable or a satellite system or a pay-TV service, will lose service after February 17, 2009, unless they acquire a digital converter box. A converter box is a new product that enables analog-only television sets to operate after February 17, 2009. A certified converter box is expected to cost between \$40 and \$70 dollars. The government has established a TV Converter Box Coupon Program to help consumers purchase digital converter boxes. The program enables consumers to acquire, at most, two coupons per household, each worth \$40 apiece, to be used to acquire digital converter boxes. A converter box plugs into a normal, analog television set and will keep the set working beyond February 17, 2009. Another

option for consumers is to purchase a television with a digital tuner.

While supplies last, coupons for analog television sets may be obtained free-of-charge, before March 31, 2009, in one of five ways, by:

- By applying online at: www.dtv2009.gov;
 - Calling the Coupon Program 24-hour Hotline at 1-888-DTV-2009 (1-800-388-2009);
 - Mailing a Coupon application to: P.O. Box 2000, Portland, Oregon, 97208-2000;
 - Faxing a Coupon application to 1-877-DTV-4ME2 (1-877-388-4632);
- or
- Deaf or hearing impaired callers may dial 1-877-530-2634 (English/TTY) or 1-866-495-1161 (Spanish/TTY). TTY service is available from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

The Coupons are being mailed via standard, rather than first-class mail, and should arrive approximately two to nine days from the date on which they are mailed. The coupons expire 90 days after they have been mailed.

The coupons are plastic cards, which look like gift cards. They cannot be printed or downloaded from any website, and they are not available to be picked up at retail locations. The U.S. government provides a list of coupon-eligible converter boxes and the participating retailers who sell them, at www.dtv2009.gov/FAQ.aspx/.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Power of Coal

Coal has always had its critics. Despite them, coal has not only endured, it has prevailed. It has helped to light and heat our homes for centuries. It fueled America's Industrial Revolution in the 19th Century. It fueled America's naval battleships in the early 20th Century. It possesses the bright potential to help America get out from under the thumb of foreign oil-wielding despots in the 21st century.

The coal industry has evolved in the last centuries, shaped by safety and environmental issues. The industry has shown a willingness to evolve further. But, recent harsh attacks and efforts to demonize coal are becoming increasingly irresponsible, inflammatory, and destructive. Coal miners hear these harsh comments and what are they to think? They're patriotic Americans. They risk their lives everyday underground. They live near the coal-fields, where they attend church and teach their children solid values. And they vote! Miners do not deserve to have their profession – or to have their family livelihood maligned.

Harsh destructive criticism of coal mining is counterproductive to the challenges that lie ahead. If our nation is ever to escape its addiction to foreign oil, coal has to be part of the solution. There's no getting around that reality.

Coal produces half of the electricity consumed by the American people. It is an economical, abundant resource at a time when the American people demand stable, reliable energy prices. The U.S. military is already making long-term investments in liquid coal technology. Some form of the chunk of rock that once burned in a stove will soon be widely used in the fuel tanks of aircraft, cars, trucks, and buses. This can be done cleanly if we will only commit to the research.

Renewable fuels have their place in the energy portfolio. But, renewables are not a panacea. Certainly one renewable energy source alone, like wind for example, will not guarantee our nation's energy independence. We need to expand our use of all renewable and alternative fuels. Solar is important, geothermal is showing promise, tidal has great possibilities, and biomass combined with coal can help reduce emissions that concern us all. That would certainly be a worthy investment for our country.

We must not allow heated rhetoric or grandiose promises to blind us to the continuing promise and need for coal. Coal is a plentiful domestic source of reliable and relatively low-cost energy, and we need it now.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

For Many Seniors and Veterans, There is Still Time to File for a Stimulus Check

This summer, millions of Americans will receive an Economic Stimulus Payment (ESP) from the federal government. Everyone who qualifies and has filed an income tax return will receive this one-time payment, which was approved by Congress earlier this year in an effort to stimulate America's struggling economy.

In addition, some 20 million low-income seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities are eligible to receive a check of \$300 for individuals and \$600 for married couples. Many who qualify, however, do not ordinarily file income-tax returns and have not yet completed the simple paperwork necessary to receive their payment.

The good news: you have until October 15th to do so. I urge you to review the information provided below to determine whether you or a family member may qualify. If you need further information, I encourage you to visit the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) website (www.irs.gov), or call their toll-free hotline – 1-866-234-2942.

Who Qualifies?

According to the IRS, you may qualify for an economic stimulus check if you had \$3000 or more in income from earnings, Social Security benefits, Social Security disability benefits, veterans' disability benefits, railroad retirement, or a combination of

these sources in 2007. You must have a valid Social Security number, and if you are married and filing jointly, your spouse must also have a valid Social Security number. If you are a dependent or eligible to be a dependent on someone else's return, you do not qualify. (www.irs.gov)

How Do People Claim the Economic Stimulus Payment?

To receive the payment, you must file a 2007 tax return. Even people who are otherwise not required to file because they have very low incomes or nontaxable benefits MUST file a Form 1040A to claim their 2008 economic stimulus payment. The IRS sent packets to some 20 million seniors, veterans and people with disabilities providing instructions on how to file the Form 1040A to get the payment. Anyone who has already filed a Form 1040, 1040A, or 1040EZ showing \$3,000 or more for 2007 does not need to file additional documents.

I hope you find this information helpful. It would be a shame for eligible West Virginians to miss out on a payment that they are entitled to by law.

Remember, the deadline to apply is October 15th. Please visit www.irs.gov for more details. If you do not have internet access or would prefer to attain information over the phone, you can contact the IRS at 1-866-234-2942.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

MEMORIAL DAY, 2008

May 26 is Memorial Day, the day we set aside each year to remember and honor those men and women who gave their lives in service to our Nation. All across the United States, families will be visiting the grave sites of their loved ones. Among rows of tombstones, adorned with small American flags, they will lay wreathes and pay their respects to those who served our country with honor and distinction in our Nation's wars.

This year, like all Memorial Days since September 11, 2001, has very special meaning as troops are engaged in hostilities in Afghanistan and Iraq. They are again showing that freedom does not come cheap. It is too often paid for not only in dollars but in the lives of America's best.

Writing about the thousands of soldiers who lost their lives during the battle at Antietam, Civil War historian Bruce Catton explained that those men did not die for a few feet of a cornfield or a rocky hill. They died so that this country might be permitted to go on, and that it might be permitted to fulfill the great hope of our Founding Fathers. So may it be said of all those courageous men and women who gave their lives in our

Nation's wars. They served and they sacrificed to defend our country, to protect our freedom and our liberties. As President Abraham Lincoln said of those soldiers who fell in the Battle of Gettysburg, they "gave their lives that this Nation might live."

It is my hope that on Memorial Day, all Americans will take time to remember those who have fought and died to preserve our great Nation. The personal suffering and sacrifice endured by our fallen soldiers and their families for the sake of our country must not go without a measure of recognition by each of us on this most solemn of days. These were real people, not just statistics in a history book or names chiseled on stone. These were young men and women with sisters, brothers, mothers, fathers, hopes, dreams, aspirations and fears like the rest of us.

But on this Memorial Day, we must also remember to pray for those American service men and women who are now in harm's way on the other side of the globe, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in other foreign lands. They are doing their duty for the Nation they cherish, and the families they love.

May 14, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

TIME TO INVEST IN AMERICA

This week, the U.S. Senate is debating the President's most recent emergency war supplemental funding request. I am frankly disturbed that while the tragic war in Iraq continues into its sixth year, critical priorities here at home continue to go unaddressed.

It is indefensible that, in his latest request, the President has not asked for funding to invest in America or to help Americans deal with a faltering economy. When it comes to Iraq, it appears that money is no object for President Bush. Yet when it comes to important priorities here at home, he turns into Ebenezer Scrooge.

The Congress has to date approved \$45 billion for reconstruction projects in Iraq. Now, despite the fact that the Iraqi government is running a huge surplus from oil revenues, the President is asking this Congress to approve another \$5.6 billion of American taxpayer dollars for reconstructing Iraq.

The President wants money to build schools in Sadr City, but not in Shepherdstown. The President wants money for Mosul, but not one dime for Morgantown. He is eager to fund projects in Baghdad, but not Beckley, Buckhannon, or Berkeley Springs.

As Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I will support our

troops, as I always have, by giving them the funding they need. We must also support and honor our troops when they return home from the battlefield. That is why we have included in the supplemental bill a provision sponsored by Senators Jim Webb and John Warner of Virginia that would provide service members who have served on active duty since September 11, 2001, including activated reservists and National Guard, with improved educational benefits similar to those provided veterans who served in the World War II-era.

As Americans struggle to find work during the current economic downturn, we have also included in the legislation an extension of unemployment benefits by 13 weeks for all workers nationwide and an additional 13 weeks for workers in high-unemployment states. This extension is critically needed and mirrors actions taken in recent recessions. We will also roll back Medicaid regulations proposed by the Bush Administration that would disrupt coverage for our most vulnerable citizens.

It is deeply distressing that the President continues to favor investing in Iraq above investing in the United States. We must not lose sight of which priorities come first, and American needs must come first.

May 21, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

FAILURE TO FUND HOMELAND SECURITY KEEPS US AT RISK

Since its inception, convincing President Bush of the urgent need to adequately fund the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has proven to be a constant struggle. As Chairman of the Senate Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, I have persistently criticized the Bush administration's insufficient homeland security budget requests because I know that American lives are on the line.

When DHS was established in November 2002, the president announced, "Our government will take every possible measure to safeguard our country and our people." I do not believe the president has lived up to that promise. His budget requests do not provide nearly enough dollars to support the more than 200,000 dedicated men and women who are working every day to keep our nation safe.

In February 2008, when Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell released the Annual Threat Assessment, we were given crystal-clear evidence that potential attacks on our homeland have not diminished. He confirmed that al Qaeda has regrouped in Pakistan and that terrorists continue to pose a significant threat to the United States.

Terrorists are likely to continue to focus on prominent infrastructure targets with the goal of producing mass casualties and significant economic damage.

Remarkably, even the alarming information contained in this threat

assessment was not enough to convince President Bush of the need to increase his DHS fiscal year 2009 budget request, which is flat. While the administration asserted that it had requested an increase of seven percent for the coming fiscal year, an accurate calculation tells us something different. The president's fuzzy math does not include the \$2.7 billion of funding for border security that Congress provided in the last emergency funding bill. Even the President's budget for 2009 recognizes that most of that emergency funding was provided not simply to address a one-time need. Rather, it constitutes a vital component of border security funding that must be supported on an on-going basis.

I am particularly troubled by the President's 48 percent proposed \$2 billion cut to first-responder grants. Hurricane Katrina tragically demonstrated how unprepared local communities are to respond to major disasters in the absence of effective support from the federal government. Dramatically cutting funds for emergency planning and for our police, fire, and emergency medical personnel will only make matters worse.

The American public can be assured that the Congress, with this Senator leading the charge, will fight to restore President Bush's reckless cuts to our homeland defense.

May 28, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

HONORING OUR FATHERS

Last month, in honor of Mother's Day, women across West Virginia were treated to cards, flowers, calls, hugs and kisses, brunches, and gifts. Retailers urged more extravagant manifestations of love for our wives and mothers, offering a dazzling array of heart-shaped diamond jewelry – all of which is certainly deserved, if not always affordable!

Sunday, June 15th, fathers get their due. A less extravagant selection -- coffee mugs, cologne, and, of course, neckties -- constitute the classic Father's Day gift assortment. Still, I am sure that most American fathers will enjoy being the center of the family's attention on Sunday.

Fathers deserve their day in the limelight. Good fathers are very busy men, and their contributions to the family merit recognition just as much as their equally busy wives do. They often fulfill the stereotypical 'Dad role' – keeping the house and the yard in good repair, even if it means tackling mechanical or construction activities for which they have little skill. They assist with homework and school projects, patiently helping to build foaming volcanoes or dioramas. They teach children to fish, paddle a canoe, or ride a bicycle. Good fathers want great

things for their children, and always let them know that they believe in them.

The man who raised me, the man I always called Dad, my adoptive father, was just such a good man. Every night he walked home from the coal mines, tired and caked with coal dust. Tired as he was, he always greeted me with a smile. Sometimes he had a cupcake in his lunch box, saved just for me. Even though I wanted to go into the mines like him, he always told me to do well in school instead. He wanted better for me than he had, and he put his energy into urging me to improve myself. His influence has been a resource for me my whole life.

For children, to have a great father, whether he is one's biological or adoptive father, or simply a father figure who influenced one's youth, is a very special thing indeed. Their children have the security of knowing, always, that they are loved and that someone is rooting for them and looking out for them. In that security, a child can find the confidence to try and to fail, and to get up and try again. It is a great and lasting gift that our fathers give to each of us, one that certainly deserves one day of specific recognition each year

June 4, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

FLAG DAY

As we celebrate Flag Day in June and look forward to the Fourth of July, I thought it an appropriate time to reflect on the origins of "Old Glory".

Early in our nation's history, many flags flew over the land that would become the United States of America. The British Union Jack, the Spanish flag, the French flag, and others identified territory and colonies under the control of those nations. As the colonies and various fighting forces organized themselves to take up the call of the new nation-to-be, many new flags began to fly. The flags, with their various designs and slogans, sought to establish a separate and often defiant new identity for our burgeoning nation.

During the War of Independence, the Continental Congress had to choose a flag under which the armies and colonies could unite. On June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress adopted a resolution establishing a national flag for the United States. It stated simply, "... the flag of the United States shall be of thirteen stripes of alternate red and white, with a union of thirteen stars of white upon a blue field, representing a new constellation." The thirteen stripes and stars symbolized the thirteen colonies that had fought for and won the

liberty to establish the new nation.

The flag grew and changed, adding stripes as well as stars before it was recognized that the expansion of the states was greater than the flag's pattern could bear.

Early in 1818, a Congressional committee presented a report recommending a proposal by Chester Reid, a naval captain and hero of the war of 1812. His suggestion was that the thirteen-stripe flag honored the original thirteen Colonies, and that new states could be honored by the simple addition of stars, to reflect the growth of the new constellation.

Old Glory still serves to unite our nation today. It is both commonplace, seen daily in front of post offices and schools, and yet hallowed, placed with solemn care over the coffin of a veteran or flying at half mast to mark a tragedy. It is also a symbol of patriotic pride, carried proudly by Olympic athletes or streaming in the wind behind a mighty warship. And who can forget the sudden, spontaneous, outbreak of U.S. flags that erupted across the nation in the wake of the 9/11 tragedy? That act captured the essence of our flag and the American spirit -- a nation defiant, strong, and united in the face of adversity.

June 11, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

BETTER INVESTMENTS FOR OUR ENERGY FUTURE

West Virginians are rightly frustrated with rising gasoline prices. During the last eight years, gas prices have quadrupled, causing terrible pains at the pump. Rural and mountainous states like West Virginia are hit harder than most due to our longer commutes and mountainous roads.

Not surprisingly, energy companies and their friends in Congress are attempting to take advantage of these frustrations. They have their sights set on drilling in the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) in Alaska. This, and similar drilling proposals, are not new. But as in the past, these industry-backed proposals usually mean more profits for the oil companies without helping American drivers.

Oil and gas companies hold leases to 92 million acres of Federal lands, but are drilling on only 25 percent of it. Doing so would produce an additional 4.8 million barrels of oil per day, about one-third of what the United States imports daily. Instead, oil and gas companies are stockpiling drilling permits in the hopes of higher profits. They are also resisting royalty payments for the resources extracted from Federal lands, even as they are benefitting from billions of dollars in sweetheart tax breaks enacted in recent years.

Given this history, I am more than a little skeptical about opening even more federal lands for oil and gas

exploration. Environmental arguments aside, these public lands and their resources belong to the American people. Simply handing them to multinational conglomerates and hoping American consumers are treated fairly at the pump is naive.

But rather than coddling the industry, let's use our leverage to ensure that oil companies minimize price increases. Let's have extensive Congressional and Federal investigations into price gouging and the obscene salaries for industry executives (since 2004, the top five oil conglomerates reported incomes totaling \$424 billion and not a dime was returned to American motorists!).

Because the oil industry benefits from taxpayer subsidies, we should insist that their profits be invested in long-term programs that benefit American consumers. Then we can improve mass transit and light rail systems, and develop technologies that rely more upon domestic energy resources like coal. This plan would help promote jobs in West Virginia and across America, while reducing the amount of checks to oil-producing nations overseas.

Simply opening more land to drilling does not fix our problem. Oil is a finite resource, and once it's gone, it's gone forever. We have a moral responsibility to invest in resources here at home and to save for future generations.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

WEST VIRGINIA DAY 2008

Certain dates on the calendar carry special meaning. These are great and glorious days that are given to devoted reverence and are a cause for recognition and adoration. Thanksgiving, the Fourth of July, and New Years Eve are a few dates that come immediately to mind. Another one that came to my mind, as it does every year, was June 20 – the day we celebrated West Virginia Day.

For it was on June 20, 1863, that West Virginia became the 35th state of the union. The state proudly adopted as its motto, the phrase, “*Montani semper liberi*,” which means, “Mountaineers are always free.”

This was a most appropriate motto for a state born in the middle of the greatest struggle for freedom and liberty in American history – the Civil War. And West Virginians have always strived to live up to our state motto.

West Virginia workers were in the forefront of the historic labor struggles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that sought an end to the exploitation and oppression of American workers that had accompanied the Industrial Revolution. In 1877, the Nation's first general strike began among the railroad workers and citizens of Martinsburg, West Virginia, after the railroad tycoons

repeatedly lowered wages. Seeking to end the industrial autocracy that had engulfed the state with the opening of the coal fields in the 1880s, West Virginia coal miners, engaged in a series of conflicts now recognized as the West Virginia Mine Wars.

West Virginia has also played an important role in the quest of African Americans for liberty and equality. For one thing, West Virginia has been the site of some of the important events in African-American history. Prior to the Civil War, John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry prefigured West Virginia's breakaway from the slaveholding Confederacy into full statehood. And Harpers Ferry later served as the setting for the second meeting of the Niagara Movement, a meeting that led to the formation of the NAACP.

I am very proud of my state and honored to represent it in the United States Senate. I have always appreciated its kind, good, and generous people and the way they have retained what I call the “old values” -- faith in god, love of country, family, honesty, decency, and integrity. And a leading value of West Virginians, as I have tried to show, has been our motto, “Mountaineers are always free.”

As always, happy birthday West Virginia. May God always bless you, and keep you free.

June 25, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

WEST VIRGINIA AND COAST GUARD: WORKING HAND IN HAND TOGETHER

While landlocked West Virginia is miles and miles away from the ocean's edge, many West Virginians would be surprised to learn of the large United States Coast Guard presence in the Mountain State.

The men and women of the Coast Guard provide a critical service to the nation, safeguarding our citizens, securing our maritime borders, and serving as stewards of the world's oceans. And over the years in my capacity as Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Subcommittee on Homeland Security, I have worked to pair national security needs with Coast Guard opportunities in West Virginia. The Mountain State is able to provide a high-quality, low-cost home for vital national initiatives. Those initiatives provide West Virginia with substantial economic investments which mean a win-win scenario for the Coast Guard, for West Virginia, and for the taxpayers of America.

Our most recent success story occurred on June 26, 2008, as Coast Guard officials dedicated a new state-of-the-art National Maritime Center (NMC) facility in Martinsburg. The mission of the NMC is to issue credentials to fully qualified mariners in the most effective and efficient manner possible in order to assure a safe, secure, economically efficient, and environmentally sound Marine Transportation System.

More than 220,000 merchant mariners and hundreds of firms depend on the NMC. Merchant Mariners must meet strict standards of capability, health, and security to work on U.S. flagged ships, ranging from charter fishing boats to cruise ships to international cargo shippers.

In 2003, I directed the Coast Guard to undertake an assessment of the costs and benefits of co-locating the Mariner License and Documentation function with the National Vessel Documentation Center in Falling Waters. In addition, I secured a \$12 million appropriation to restructure and centralize the facility in the Eastern Panhandle.

The National Maritime Center in Martinsburg now joins the Coast Guard's Operations System Center and the National Vessel Documentation Center in the Eastern Panhandle. And with this new facility, the Coast Guard has once again proven what I have been saying for years: federal agencies can have offices in Washington, but also get far more bang for the federal buck by locating other key operations in West Virginia. I'm going to keep working to find West Virginia solutions to national needs. We've shown that West Virginians can get the job done. We have the workforce. We have the infrastructure to support demanding high-tech projects. We have an excellent quality of life. Overall, there is no beating West Virginia.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

THE GREEN BANK TELESCOPE PROVES AN EINSTEIN THEORY

This month, scientists working with the National Science Foundation's Robert C. Byrd Green Bank Telescope published the results of a study that supports Albert Einstein's 93-year-old theory of General Relativity. Put simply, the General Theory of Relativity proposed that matter causes space to curve. Einstein theorized that smaller masses travel toward larger masses not because they are drawn in by a mysterious force, but because the smaller masses travel through space that is warped by the larger object. This theory has intrigued many scientists over the years, but it has been difficult to find evidence to prove it.

The telescope at Green Bank allowed the scientists, including Maura McLaughlin of West Virginia University, as well as researchers from Canada, Great Britain, France, Italy and the United States, to examine a unique pair of twinned neutron stars, or pulsars, 1,700 light-years from Earth whose orbital plane is aligned nearly perfectly with their line of sight to the Earth. This configuration causes the lighthouse-like beams of radio waves emitted by each pulsar to be blocked, or eclipsed, as they orbit each other every two and a half hours. These eclipses allowed the astronomers to verify Einstein's 1915 theory, which predicted that in

a close system of two very massive objects, such as neutron stars, one object's gravitational tug, along with an effect of its spinning around its axis, should cause the spin axis of the other object to "precess," or wobble like a spinning top.

Theories of gravity do not differ significantly in ordinary regions of space, such as our Solar System, but in regions of extremely strong gravity fields, such as that surrounding the twinned pulsars, the differences predicted by Einstein were expected to show up. Confirming the wobbling tested key details, building the case for the accuracy of Einstein's theory.

The Robert C. Byrd Green Bank Telescope in Pocahontas County is the world's largest fully steerable radio telescope. Dedicated in August 2000, its unusual design includes small motor-driven pistons at the corner of each of the 2,004 panels that make up the surface of the telescope, allowing the surface of the dish to be precisely adjusted for critical high-frequency performance.

The Green Bank telescope has again proven its worth in international science, astronomy and physics. Today, it has enabled scientists to prove some of Albert Einstein's greatest theories about space and time. Who knows what tomorrow will bring?



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

TAKING THE STING OUT OF BUSH'S CUTS TO THE MEDICARE PROGRAM

This past week, the House and the Senate reversed President Bush's callous veto of Medicare legislation. The President's action would have had devastating effects on our nation's Medicare program and on the more than 44 million American seniors who depend on the program for all or part of their health care.

The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 will prevent doctors' Medicare reimbursement payments from being slashed by a whopping 10.6 percent over the next 18 months. Reimbursements from Medicare to West Virginia doctors alone could have been reduced by \$80 million dollars over this period. If this cut had gone into effect, as the Bush Administration was advocating, it was widely expected that many doctors would simply stop treating Medicare patients.

As West Virginia is a largely rural state, a failure to reverse the President's veto would have also created new challenges to those seeking to obtain quality health care services in their own backyard. However, with the override of the President's veto -- which I supported -- Congress has helped to ensure that rural health care facilities and providers have the resources they need to deliver quality health care in their communities.

With inpatient care facilities being far and few between in rural areas -- in

some instances the sole community hospital can be 50 miles away -- the legislation seeks to update the data that is used to reimburse sole community hospitals for care, which will most likely mean an increase in payments to those facilities.

By exploring ways to better coordinate care among critical access hospitals, home health, nursing homes and other providers, the bill aids rural communities that are in danger of losing specialty health care services that seniors need close to home. This will enable rural West Virginians to have a full complement of health care options.

In addition, the bill increases Medicare payments for ground ambulance services in rural areas. For rural ambulance providers, the bill requires more consideration of a physician's recommendation for air ambulance services when Medicare seeks justification for the expense.

Overall, the measure would increase coverage of preventive health care services, provide more affordable mental health care and help more low-income seniors access the subsidies and assistance that make Medicare more affordable.

It is distressing that President Bush fails to realize the importance of health care access for our seniors. It is fortunate that the Congress had the wisdom to reverse this ill-advised veto.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

ONGOING OVERSIGHT OF WASTE, FRAUD AND ABUSE IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

The Senate Appropriations Committee recently held its second hearing on the topic of waste, fraud, and abuse in Iraq and Afghanistan. I scheduled this hearing because I want to confront the lack of oversight regarding contracts awarded for services and construction in Iraq, and the failure by the Departments of Defense and Justice to aggressively investigate and prosecute contract fraud and abuse. This lack of oversight has resulted in tens of billions of tax dollars having been lost or wasted on bad contractors and shoddy workmanship – even resulting in the deaths of our soldiers. According to some sources, some of those U.S. funds and weapons have made their way to foreign insurgent groups that have used them against our own soldiers.

The Army's funding of contracts has increased by more than 350 percent over the last 11 years, while the government's oversight workforce has decreased by more than 50 percent. Too few auditors and too few contract specialists mean no one is watching the store when it comes to contracts and private contractors. Too few investigators are being tasked with bring-

ing perpetrators of fraud, waste, and corruption to justice and with recovering stolen billions. There are individuals living high on the hog in the United States and in cities across Europe and the Middle East on these stolen tax dollars.

The FBI has a grand total of only five investigators working these cases in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a result of the lack of enforcement actions, more unsavory characters can get away with bilking the U.S. taxpayer or the Iraqi government, embezzling funds, taking and making bribes, substituting inferior goods or inferior workmanship, or just plain stealing. This illegal activity takes money directly away from the pressing needs of our troops and the needs of the Iraqi and Afghan people.

Congress needs to make "collars and dollars" our motto – more arrests, more indictments, and more funds recovered. We need to be much more aggressive about minimizing the waste, fraud, and abuse associated with these wars. I am determined to address these issues. It is outrageous that the Bush Administration has turned a blind eye to such abuses.

July 23, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

OUR OLYMPIANS

The 2008 Summer Olympics, officially known as the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, begin on August 8th in Beijing, China. The motto of this year's games is "One World, One Dream," and viewers around the world will surely tune in to see athletes in 28 different sports attempt to make their Olympic dreams come true in each of the 302 events.

Since the original games in 776 B.C., the Olympics have brought together great athletes in a setting of peaceful competition. When the modern Olympic Games were reestablished in 1896, 241 participants from 14 nations took part. In Beijing, more than 10,500 athletes from more than 200 nations are expected to compete.

Several athletes at the 2008 Summer Games have ties to West Virginia, so everyone in our state also may feel a special interest in the USA baseball team, riflery team, and women's track and field events. These competitors also have ties to West Virginia University, so Mountaineer alumni around the country surely will be cheering on these special athletes.

Jeremy Cummings, of Charleston, played baseball for South Charleston High School and West Virginia University before beginning a career in minor league baseball that took him across the United States, Canada and even Taiwan.

Cummings currently lives in Huntington, where he is completing work on his undergraduate degree at Marshall University. Playing on team USA in this most American of sports at the Olympics in Beijing will be a career highlight that he will share with an elite group of just 23 other baseball players in the United States.

A 2005 West Virginia University alumna from Edmonton, Alberta, Megan Metcalfe will represent Canada in the 5,000 meter track event. Metcalfe was a nine-time All-American at WVU in both cross country and track and field. She still lives and trains in Morgantown under WVU track and field and cross country coach Sean Cleary. She also works part-time as a physical therapist at Ruby Memorial Hospital.

West Virginia University alumni and WVU rifle coach since 2006, John Hammond will also compete in the Beijing Olympics. A native of Aberdeen, Scotland, Hammond will represent Great Britain in three events: the 50-meter prone, three-position, and 60-shot air rifle. Any success he enjoys may result in a medal for Great Britain, but it will reflect admirably on West Virginia and the United States as well.

Best wishes to Team USA and to our West Virginia Olympians!

July 30, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

SUMMER FUN CLOSE TO HOME

The uncertain economy and high gas prices have put a dent in many families' paychecks this summer. Across the United States, people are cutting back and pinching pennies. Rising airline ticket costs and other travel fees have made air travel increasingly unaffordable, especially for families. The Travel Industry Association projects that summer travel will drop 1.5 percent from last year, and other industry sources say that trips this year tend to be shorter and closer to home.

Fortunately, West Virginia is full of beautiful, exciting, historic and artistic destinations that can fill a summer vacation schedule without emptying the gas tank. The West Virginia tourism website, www.wvtourism.com, is a great place to start your planning. It features upcoming events around the state, from county fairs to festivals, summer concerts to dinner theaters. It also offers links to targeted web sites that can help plan trips around a variety of different themes, such as golf, river sports, history, outdoor adventures, and cultural activities.

Information about West Virginia's 48 state parks, forests and wildlife management areas can be found at www.wvstateparks.com. These parks are not just for picnics, as the busy calendar of events demonstrates. Hiking, nature walks, Appalachian dance, square dancing – you

are sure to get a fun workout at a West Virginia state park! You can make reservations on-line for events, programs, and lodging. Pet friendly cabins are available in many locations, so the entire family can enjoy the summer vacation.

History abounds in West Virginia, from family histories to museums and sites linked to American history and industry. Explore the Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine and Museum, the New Deal Homestead Museum in Arthurdale, and do not overlook the Cass Scenic Railroad State Park or Harpers Ferry National Historic Park. Children young and old might enjoy a trip to Wheeling for the Kruger Street Toy and Train Museum, the Official Marx Toy Museum and the Museums of Oglebay Institute. You can even visit prehistoric sites. The West Virginia Division of Culture and History, at www.wvculture.org, is a good place to start, with links to the National Register of Historic Places, cemetery information for those interested in family history, and news about frontier forts and prehistoric archeological sites in the state.

Though this summer's tough economy has forced us to become more cost conscious, it also challenges us to be more adventurous about exploring new destinations close to home – in Wild and Wonderful West Virginia.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

INVESTING IN WEST VIRGINIA'S AIR NATIONAL GUARD

West Virginia's Air National Guard -- composed of the 167th Airlift Wing based at Shepherd Field in Martinsburg and the 130th Airlift Wing at Yeager Airbase in Charleston -- is not only a major asset to the U.S. military, but also a vital part of the West Virginia community. As your Senator, I am committed to supporting the men and women of the 167th and 130th by providing them with the resources they need to thrive for many years to come.

In 2005, when Yeager Airbase was placed on the Pentagon's Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) list, I worked alongside state, local, and federal officials in coordination with the West Virginia National Guard and grassroots supporters to save the base. I am now renewing my efforts in the Senate to update and expand the Guard's capabilities in Charleston.

To that end, I added \$27 million this year to legislation for the construction of a C-130 fuel cell hangar. Eventually, the C-130 hangar will be connected to a new maintenance hangar that will be built with funds I secured last year. Together, the new facilities would expand capabilities at Yeager and help to protect the facility from potential efforts to close the base.

I have also been working

to support enhancements and upgrades to the Martinsburg Airbase. In 1999, I began working with Pentagon officials to bring ten C-5 transport planes to the 167th in Martinsburg.

One of the largest aircraft in the world, the C-5 is a true marvel. With its unique capabilities, it is invaluable to Air Force military and humanitarian efforts. The first of the new fleet of C-5 aircraft landed in Martinsburg in 2006. Once the C-5 unit is fully operational, the 167th anticipates an additional 200 full-time jobs. The annual economic impact is expected to increase to at least \$50 million a year annually.

To support construction of the C-5, I have worked in the Senate to fund the infrastructure needed to accommodate this project. Recently, I announced \$14.5 million in contract awards for the construction of a C-5 Squadron Operations facility, the continued development of the base's parking apron, and for runway expansion projects at the airport.

Recently, twenty-eight members of the 167th Airlift Wing shipped out for duty in Iraq. I, along with all West Virginians, wish them Godspeed and a safe return home. With top-notch facilities, leadership, and training, I know they will continue to be the pride of our state and the nation.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

LABOR DAY 2008

The first Monday in September is set aside each year to recognize the dignity of work and to thank American workers for their contribution to creating a better and stronger country.

Labor Day is an honorable American tradition. In 1893, legislation was introduced in Congress to establish Labor Day as a federal holiday. The next year, President Grover Cleveland signed the legislation into law, and 115 years later, we still use this day to honor those who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow.

Four years ago, I used my Byrd's Eye View on Labor Day as the opportunity to celebrate some of the great labor leaders our state has produced. That column received so much favorable attention that I decided to honor those individuals again this year and recognize our state's pride in their accomplishments.

Frank Keeney, Fred Mooney, and Bill Blizzard were West Virginia coal miners and rank-and-file leaders who helped lay the foundation for the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) in our state. Arnold Miller of Cabin Creek was a leader in the black lung movement in the 1960's who, in 1972, was elected president of the UMWA. Current UMWA president Cecil Roberts also hails from Cabin Creek.

John Easton of Williamstown was a flint glass worker who served

as president of the West Virginia State Federation of Labor during the 1920's and as an official in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the 1930's.

Miles Stanley of Dunbar was president of his local steelworkers union and helped to negotiate the merger that formed the West Virginia AFL-CIO, of which he served as president from 1957 to 1974.

Ned Guthrie of Morgantown was the national legislative director of the American Federation of Musicians Union in the 1980's and was instrumental in bringing collective bargaining rights to that profession.

Joseph W. Powell was president of the West Virginia AFL-CIO for 23 years (1974-1997). Mr. Powell was recently inducted into the Southwestern District Labor Council's Hall of Fame.

And there was the great Walter Reuther from Wheeling, who was president of the United Auto Workers in 1946, president of the CIO in 1952, and vice president of the AFL-CIO in 1955.

This Labor Day, I thank all West Virginia workers. The work they do each day, whether mining coal, pumping gas, cutting meat in a grocery store, or serving the public, is important. West Virginia's history boasts many well-known labor leaders, but it is all of us, working together, that combine to make America a great nation.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

CREATE YOUR OWN CONSTITUTION DAY CELEBRATION!

The Constitution of the United States will celebrate its 221st birthday on September 17, 2008. On or near that date, I hope that citizens across our great land will honor our National Charter in thoughtful and creative ways. By law, September 17th has been designated Constitution and Citizenship Day. This is the date, in 1787, on which the Constitution was signed by the Framers in Philadelphia.

In December 2004, I helped to enact the federal law that designates September 17th of each year as Constitution and Citizenship Day. I did so because I care deeply about this precious document. On and around September 17th, I would like all Americans to take the time to read the text of the Constitution. Each and every American needs to better comprehend the genius of this extraordinary document. When I declare that every American needs to dedicate themselves more fully to the study of our Constitution, I refer to Members of Congress and Presidents, as well as all other Americans.

Consequently, I invite all Americans to come together in mid-September to read, analyze, and reflect on the Constitution. It is a learned and dynamic document. Brilliant in its brevity, it remains extraordinary in its wisdom. It protects our individual liberties. It

reveals the courage and creativity of our forefathers. How commendable that they put aside their personal differences to create this special document for the common good! In so doing, they created the unique and incomparable separation of powers that is reflected by the three branches of our government.

My hope is that citizens of every State in the Union, including children, will be inspired to organize local celebrations of Constitution Day. Just as the National Education Project for the past three years has organized "Constitution Day on the National Mall" here in Washington, D.C., people across the nation, in every large city and small town, should organize their own spectacular event in honor of Constitution Day. Let us spread the excitement of celebrating Constitution Day on September 17th far and wide, through every hill and dale, across the Great Plains, through the Deep South, across the West, the Southwest, the Northeast, as well as up and down the Atlantic Seaboard, and especially in West Virginia.

Let us all unite on September 17, 2008, to appreciate our magnificent Constitution.

I hope that you will work with me to preserve and protect our Constitution in this new and exciting way.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

REMEMBERING SEPTEMBER 11

Seven years ago a pleasant autumn morning became a day of horror. Terrorists hijacked four American commercial passenger jets and used them in their barbaric, twisted plot. Two airliners struck the World Trade Center in New York City. A third slammed into the Pentagon. A fourth, on direct course with the U.S. Capitol, was diverted by brave passengers and crashed into a field in Pennsylvania, killing all on board.

We will never forget the sights of that day: the collapse of those buildings, people running through the streets, the plumes of smoke that emerged from Ground Zero and the gaping hole in the Pentagon, the very symbol of America's military might.

The tragic events of that day certainly transformed our world. When we saw that second plane slam into the Twin Towers, we all sensed that America would never be the same again. The world's most powerful and wealthiest nation suddenly and shockingly discovered that it too, was vulnerable. Our great country became a nation under siege as security check points increased and security everywhere intensified. Electronic billboards appeared over our interstate highways telling motorists to report "suspicious activity."

Among the transformations of that day was that, for a while, ours became a united

country. The terrorist attack of 9/11 had cut across all racial, religious, economic and ethnic lines, and, as a result, our country was united in emotion and purpose. For a while, Americans were unified in our determination to seek out and destroy the terrorists who had attacked us.

And, for a while, much of the world was united. "We are all Americans," proclaimed the French newspaper *Le Monde*, shortly after the attacks of 9/11.

For a while, the American people and the nations of the world rallied behind President Bush as he undertook a war against the dreaded terrorists. All of us were ready and willing to go after the butchers who had taken the lives of so many innocent people, so many of our fellow countrymen.

But then President Bush became determined to shift the war to Iraq, and everything changed. The war with Iraq has deeply divided our formerly unified country. And, because of Mr. Bush's War, we find ourselves more and more isolated from the rest of the world. The war on terror has bogged down, and Osama Bin Laden remains alive and well because of the Bush War in Iraq.

That 9/11 has come to symbolize not only the tragic loss of innocent life, but also a lost opportunity, may be among the most far reaching consequences of that autumn day seven years ago.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

THOSE WEST VIRGINIA HILLS

September 15 is a special day in the history of our great state. It was on that day in 1885 that a little newspaper in Gilmer County, the *Glennville Crescent*, published a poem by Ellen Ruddell King.

The poem was only four verses, but in it, Mrs. King, who was born in Glennville, April 22, 1846, not only captured the beauty and grace of the rolling green hills of West Virginia, but expressed the pride that the people of West Virginia have in them. There are some indications that Mrs. King may have collaborated with her husband, the Reverend David H. King, in writing the poem. Nevertheless, the poem is clearly identified as Mrs. King's creation, and it was magnificent and appealing.

A farmer and music teacher from Philippi, Henry Everett Engle, read Mrs. King's poem and was so moved by it that he decided to make a song of it. He composed the music for it along with a chorus. Soon, people all over our state were singing what would become one of the most recognized and beloved songs in our state, "The West Virginia Hills."

In 1960, the West Virginia Music Education Association began urging the state to formally adopt Mrs. King's song as the state song of West Virginia. The effort was successful. On February 3, 1961, the West Virginia State Legislature passed a resolution to

officially adopt "The West Virginia Hills" as the state song of West Virginia.

Two years later, during the state's centennial year, 1963, "West Virginia, My Home Sweet Home," by Colonel Julian G. Hearne Jr. of Wheeling, and "This is My West Virginia," by Iris Bell of Charleston, were also adopted as state songs. Both of these are beautiful and touching songs that express the majesty of our state. But, Mrs. King's creation remains the most recognized and most beloved of our three state songs. I fondly recall the first stanza and chorus:

Oh, the West Virginia hills!
How majestic and how grand,
With their summits bathed in glory,
Like our Prince Immanuel's Land!
Is it any wonder then,
That my heart with rapture thrills,
As I stand once more with loved ones
On those West Virginia hills?

Oh, the hills,
Beautiful Hills,
How I love those West Virginia hills,
If o'er sea or land I roam,
Still I think of happy home,
And my friends among the West Virginia hills.

It all began on September 15, 1885.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Voter Registration Deadline is Nearing

Exercising our right to vote is perhaps the most fundamental responsibility we have as American citizens. An engaged electorate holds politicians and government officials accountable for addressing the needs of the people. It is the only means by which we can truly realize a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people," as described so eloquently by Abraham Lincoln in his famous Gettysburg Address. Millions of Americans have given their lives defending this sacred right.

The next leader of our country will face many extraordinary challenges - from fixing our broken economy to restoring America's leadership position in the world. In this great country of ours, it is up to you - the people - to decide who that leader will be. That is a great responsibility indeed! If you are an eligible West Virginia voter and have not registered, you will miss out on your chance to have a say in this critical matter.

Registering to vote is very simple. West Virginia has a toll-free hotline for voter information - **(866) SOS-VOTE** or **(866) 767 - 8683**. You can also find the West Virginia voter registration form and helpful information on eligibility online at <http://www.wvsos.com/elections/voters/registernow.htm>.

Once you have com-

pleted the registration form, mail it to your county clerk, whose address can be found at <http://www.wvsos.com/service/rosters/county-clerks.htm>. In order to be eligible to vote in the upcoming election, you must register by **October 14th**, which is just a few weeks away.

If you are going to be out of the state during the election, or are unable to vote in person, you can easily request an absentee ballot, which can be mailed or faxed to your County or Municipal Clerk. You can obtain an absentee ballot request form at <http://www.wvsos.com/service/findforms.htm>, or by calling **(866) SOS-VOTE**. You should receive the ballot in the mail in the following weeks. Be sure to return your completed ballot to the County or Municipal Clerk's office in time for them to receive it at least six days before the election.

Voting is essential to the success of democracy. The actions of the government affect your life and the lives of those around you. Make sure your voice is heard, and register to vote before October 14th. If you know of a family member, friend or neighbor who is not registered, please encourage them to do so. On Election Day - November 4th - regardless of which political party or candidate you support, let your voice be heard!



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Wall Street in Turmoil

The shock waves storming through our financial markets and the resulting impact on our economy, and on everyday Americans, have left many citizens deeply anxious and justifiably angry. I share those feelings.

Company names like Merrill Lynch, Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers, and AIG, names that have stood for stability to the investing public for many years, have been shaken from their very foundations, causing turmoil on Wall Street and throughout the world's financial markets.

What is the average West Virginian to make of all this? I wish I could say that this will all blow over in a few days, but it will not. What are we to do? Fortunately, within our FDIC system, there are government financial guarantees in place protecting deposit and retirement accounts. A few websites you can visit to obtain more information are: www.fdic.gov, www.federalreserve.gov, and www.occ.treas.gov. Your questions also may be answered toll free by the FDIC Call Center at 877-275-3342.

In hopes of averting further erosion of our financial markets and to help stabilize the economy, the Bush Administration has responded with a request to Congress to place \$700 billion – that is BILLION – in the hands of one government official to spend without review by any court or agency!

Congress must not rush to judgment on this proposal. We need to take a good, hard, close look at this request and carefully weigh its consequences, for the short and long terms for our economy, for our families, and for our government. The Constitutional system of checks and balances in our government must be preserved and not suddenly surrendered in the midst of misunderstood panic.

The request for such unchecked authority is shocking, and the price tag is so staggering, that if approved, our national debt as a percentage of our gross domestic product (GDP) would rise to its highest level since 1954, a time when we were still paying for World War II. Moreover, our federal budget deficit could approach an unfathomable \$1 trillion for a single fiscal year. This could force draconian cuts in almost every federal domestic program and might further hinder economic recovery for people on Main Street.

The poison seeds of this calamity – deregulation and lax enforcement – have been sown over the past eight years by the same Administration that proposes this disturbing remedy. One thing is certain as we move forward with efforts to restore confidence in our financial markets - there must be greater, not less, Congressional oversight of our overwhelmingly complex financial systems and the government entities that oversee and regulate them.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Early Voting May be a Convenience for West Virginians

A reliable, quick, and relatively simple way for registered voters to make certain that we complete our civic duty in the upcoming general election is to vote early, meaning prior to the general election date of November 4, 2008. West Virginia began in-person early voting in 2002, and it has enjoyed increased popularity in recent elections.

This year, the period of in-person early voting in West Virginia begins twenty days before the election, and it continues until three days before the election. This means that most in-person early voting in West Virginia will generally occur Monday through Friday from October 15 to November 1, 2008. Early voting hours on those dates will range from roughly 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.,* with the precise hours, listed by county, available at the following website: <http://www.wvvotes.com/voters/documents/EarlyVotingHours.pdf>

Early voting will also be available on the two Saturdays before the election, October 25, 2008, and November 1, 2008, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The Clerk of the County Commission (County Clerk) is responsible for the administration of early voting. A voter need only go to the County Clerk's Office and ask to vote early in-person. He or she may then vote, just as they

would on election day in a voting booth at their normal precinct. If a paper ballot is used, the voted ballot will be sealed in an envelope and placed in a ballot box. Then, on election day, that ballot will go to the voter's normal precinct, where it will be counted or placed with other ballots for computer tabulation.

The area reserved for early voting at the courthouse must conform to the same requirements applicable to a regular polling place. Such requirements include that a sufficient number of voting booths or devices be available, and they must be arranged to provide the voter with complete privacy. Further, all ballots, both voted and unvoted, must be secured at all times. In addition, the location must be accessible to voters with physical disabilities, and no "electioneering" is permitted on the property of the courthouse during the period of voting.

Additional information concerning early voting is available by writing the Office of the West Virginia Secretary of State, Bldg. 1, Suite 157K, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E.

Charleston, WV 25305; by telephoning (304) 558-6000; or by accessing the web at:

<http://www.wvvotes.com/voters/early-voting.php>

* Some counties' hours of operation may differ slightly on certain days of the week.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

FABULOUS FALL IN WEST VIRGINIA

How truly blessed we are in West Virginia by the beauty of our State, and never is that beauty more apparent than with the coming of the lovely fall foliage. As the days turn shorter, and the frost draws nigh, we have a few precious weeks to enjoy all of the colors cascading through the hills. No place on God's Earth can parallel the views of our majestic mountains and valleys, awash with fiery reds, warm amber, vibrant auburn, and golden hues.

So striking is our fall foliage that many travel every autumn to West Virginia to marvel at our wondrous hills, brushed with the colors of the season's pallet. "Leaf peepers," as they are often called, visit West Virginia every year to behold the bountiful beauty, and to take advantage of the renowned hospitality we offer. Luckily, this fall season in particular promises a grand display of color. The U.S. Forest Service is predicting a good year for fall foliage, and West Virginia should be particularly brilliant given the ample rain we received earlier in the year.

As the leaves begin to change, I am reminded of the Robert Frost poem, "Gathering Leaves." The poet wrote:

Spades take up leaves
No better than spoons,
And bags full of
leaves
Are light as balloons.

I make a great noise
Of rustling all day
Like rabbit and deer
Running away.

But the mountains I
raise
Elude my embrace,
Flowing over my arms
And into my face.

I may load and unload
Again and again
Till I fill the whole
shed,
And what have I then?

Next to nothing for
weight,
And since they grew
duller
From contact with
earth,
Next to nothing for
color.

Next to nothing for
use.
But a crop is a crop,
And who's to say
where
The harvest shall
stop?

I encourage all to get
out and enjoy the splendid
joys of our Creator during
this beautiful fall foliage
time.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

“EARMARKS” IS NOT A DIRTY WORD

In recent weeks, there has been an increased focus on the issue of Congress earmarking funds for specific projects. Some Members of Congress and even one of the presidential candidates have asserted that all “earmarked” funding is wasteful spending or an abuse of power which should be ended.

Congress has the power of the purse. That is stipulated in the Constitution. Since the beginning of our Republic, Congress has allocated money for specific projects and purposes. For example, in 1798, \$3,500 was appropriated for firewood and candles for the Treasury Department, and \$454.41 was appropriated for rent at a house, “near Gray’s Ferry on the Schuylkill.”

An earmark is an explicit direction from the Congress about how the Federal Government should spend the people’s money. Yet earmarks are arguably the most criticized and the least understood of Congressional practices. Accounting for less than 1% of the federal budget, there is nothing inherently wrong with an earmark. It is absolutely consistent with the Framers intentions, codified in Article I of the Constitution, giving the power of the purse to the representatives of the people.

Well intentioned though they may be, the civil servants making budget decisions in the Executive agencies of the Federal Govern-

ment do not understand the communities that Members of Congress represent. They do not meet with the constituencies. Bureaucrats can be poor judges of what is necessary and what is frivolous from the perspective of the states and the people. These bureaucrats are not elected and therefore are not directly accountable to the people.

Earmarks serve an important purpose. They are the safety net for situations when formula funding fails or when extraordinary circumstances exist. Recently, I was in Putnam County to dedicate the opening of 2.1 miles of upgrades to U.S. Route 35. This new highway was the result of my efforts to secure dedicated funding, or earmarks, to move this project forward. We all know that it has never been easy to secure federal funds for the building of highways in West Virginia. Our beautiful mountains that we love so much also make it costly--up to \$25 million per mile--to build modern highways. Time and again, I have had to fight the Bush Administration and its supporters in the Congress to ensure that West Virginia is not left out when it comes to safer roads and bridges.

And you can bet that I will continue to push hard in the U.S. Senate, and use my experience, and earmarks, when necessary, to build for the future of the people of the great State of West Virginia.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

WHAT'S AT STAKE ON NOVEMBER 4TH

In these difficult times, some West Virginians are understandably upset with the direction of our country. This frustration, which has been building for years, is a natural response to job loss and the real-life consequences of eight years of a failing economy and a long, dismal war. As Americans suffer through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, it is important to remember that things could be different. Leadership matters. Elections matter. Your vote really does count.

On November 4th, West Virginians and all Americans will have the opportunity to weigh in and select a new leader for our nation—and the stakes could not be higher.

In the more than six decades that I have served in public office—from the West Virginia House of Delegates to the U.S. Senate—I cannot remember a time when our country was in more urgent need of maximum participation by our citizens.

The question before us is clear. Do we want to continue on the path we have been traveling for the last eight years or do we wish to chart a new course?

Will we be satisfied with four more years of the same policies that have

led to a faltering economy and the loss of millions of jobs or will we opt for a new direction that tries to achieve sustainable economic growth?

Will we continue with what appears to be an endless war in Iraq, which has cost thousands of American lives and hundreds of billions of dollars or will we choose to find a way to end this ruinous occupation and bring our troops home with honor?

On November 4th, I urge you to fully consider what is at stake, and just how important this election will be for our country, for you, and for your family's future.

Voting is much more than a civic duty. It is a sacred privilege. At this pivotal moment in our history, we simply cannot afford more of the same kind of apathy we have seen in past elections. Our citizens need to demonstrate the courage to face challenges, voice their opinions, and participate in renewing the promise of America. West Virginians have always been at the head of the line when it comes to doing our duty for our great country. I am confident we will be there again. Whatever your political persuasion, go to the polls, take a friend, and vote.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

VETERAN'S DAY 2008

President John F. Kennedy liked to quote a poem found in an old sentry box at Gibraltar. The poem read:

God and the soldier, all men adore

In time of trouble and no more,

For when war is over, and all things righted,

God is neglected and the old soldier slighted.

The multitude of churches that cover our great land is a reminder that in the United States of America, God is not neglected. And Veterans Day is a vivid, powerful reminder of the debt that each and every American owes to our nation's veterans, and that they must never be slighted.

Veterans Day is a day of reverence. It is the one day of the year that we set aside to honor the people who have defended our country, our way of life, and our freedom. It is the day that a grateful nation takes the time to pause, to recognize, and to thank our bravest and finest citizens for their patriotism and their willingness to serve and to sacrifice.

The very origins of this day are both historic and symbolic. It began at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, that is, 11/11/11 of 1918, when the Allied Powers signed a cease-fire agreement with the Central Powers,

thus bringing to an end the bloody nightmare known as World War I.

The next year, the United States set aside November 11th as Armistice Day to remember and honor the sacrifices that men and women made during World War I. In 1926, a Congressional Resolution officially named November 11th Armistice Day. And twelve years later, in 1938, Congress made Armistice Day a national holiday.

In 1954, following World War II and the Korean War, Congress made November 11 a day to honor veterans of all wars, and, therefore, changed the name of this most important day to "Veterans Day."

Writing about the thousands of soldiers who lost their lives during the Civil War Battle of Antietam -- the bloodiest single day in American history -- the great historian of that war, Bruce Catton, explained that those men did not die for a few feet of a cornfield or a rocky hill. They died that our country might be permitted to go on, and that it might be permitted to fulfill the great hope of our Founding Fathers.

The same may be said of every person who has worn our Nation's uniform. They served and sacrificed to permit this country to go on, to fulfill the great hope of our Founding Fathers.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Relief for Main Street Americans

The recent economic meltdown on Wall Street has, regrettably, served as the final verdict on the failed economic policies of the past eight years. All the while, Americans on Main Street are facing even tougher times in the form of higher unemployment, rising food costs, and skyrocketing health care costs.

In September, Congress and the White House worked together to craft a package to rescue Wall Street in an effort to restore confidence in our credit markets and to shore up our faltering economy. Now that the government has taken action to address the credit crisis, I believe that we must address the struggles of Americans living on all of the Main Streets in West Virginia and all around the country.

The almost daily dismal statistics facing our economy are simply mind boggling. The U.S. economy has lost jobs every month this year, for a total of over 700,000 jobs. Construction has lost more than 525,000 jobs since September 2006. Manufacturing has lost 353,000 jobs since June 2007, and a recent report has indicated that the nation's manufacturing sector has fallen to a 26-year low. Auto sales have nosedived and consumer confidence is at a near 50-year low. Food prices have increased by

7.5 percent this year after increasing 4.9 percent in 2007. And despite some recent relief from prices at the pump, energy prices remain at very high levels – having risen more than 22% this year alone -- and the winter season has not yet arrived.

When Congress returns to work the week of November 17th, it is my hope that we move forward with a badly needed economic stimulus package that will create jobs, help Americans cope with high energy costs, and provide relief for those struggling to find work and put food on the table. There are major consequences for not investing in America and the American people.

Minimally, this package should include an extension of unemployment benefits for the jobless; a temporary increase in food stamp benefits; additional funding for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program; help for states to pay for Medicaid; and investing in our infrastructure in order to put people back to work.

I believe that the time to act on these priorities is now. If we can provide a \$700 billion bailout for Wall Street, then we in Congress, along with the Bush Administration, should support a targeted investment to create jobs and assist Americans on Main Street.

November 5, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE COMPETITION PROMOTES READING FOR STUDENTS

Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, the three "R's," was the way we were taught when I was young and attended a two-room schoolhouse. I would go to school during the day, finish my chores and homework in the early evening and then fall asleep reading by the light of a kerosene oil lamp. I looked at education as an opportunity to excel and to this day I'm not too old to keep learning. Education, to me, has been a passport to progress.

While education is universal in our country today, it is perhaps hard for some to realize just how much a high school diploma was coveted only a couple of generations or so ago – or actually how few people had one.

Our young people today seem more pre-occupied with video games, watching television, and listening to the latest and loudest music. They are no longer eager to open a book and turn its pages to reveal the next opportunity to stimulate the mind.

But the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress has launched an exciting new program called Letters About Literature (LAL). It is a nationwide writing contest that celebrates the relationship between young readers and authors. Students are invited to write a personal letter to an author explaining how his or her

work somehow changed the reader's view of the world.

Letters About Literature provides a challenging opportunity to young readers by asking them to write to a particular audience, or explain or describe his or her personal reader response to the work they had just read. This encourages meaningful reading and helps to create successful writers. Competition is grouped into three grade categories: 4 – 6; 7 & 8; and 9 – 12.

In addition to the educational rewards students obtain from this exercise, each year LAL awards more than 150 state-level prizes. The program also selects six national winners, each of whom will earn for their individual community or school library a \$10,000 Letters About Literature Reading Promotion Grant. Twelve national honorable mention winners will each earn a \$1,000 grant for the community or school library of their choice.

So I encourage all West Virginia students to participate in this reading and writing competition. The development of the human mind is all too important in this ever changing global environment. Go to the LAL website, www.lettersabout-literature.org to obtain how-to-enter guidelines. But you better hurry, as the postmark deadline for this competition is December 6, 2008. Good luck and good reading.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Giving Thanks in These Changing Times

Thanksgiving is one of America's oldest and most beloved holidays. It is a day devoted to turkey, family, football, parades, and the beginning of the Christmas season. Most importantly, it is, or should be, a day devoted to God.

Four centuries ago, a small but courageous group of people left their homeland, boarded a flimsy, little craft, journeyed across a mighty ocean, and settled in an inscrutable wilderness. They took all of these risks because they wanted to worship God as they pleased.

Think about it! How many of us today profess to be religious, but hate getting up on Sunday morning in order to go to church? How many of us do not like to walk those few blocks or drive those few miles to worship God? But here were the Pilgrims crossing a three-thousand mile ocean and facing the darkest of unknowns in order to exercise this sacred right.

I have always been in awe of the courage of the Pilgrims and their devotion to God. A year after landing in the New World, the Pilgrims set aside time to express their gratitude to God for protecting them, and for preserving their community. Despite all of the hardships and agony they had endured, our

forefathers still set aside time to thank God for His goodness.

Two years later, in 1623, the Pilgrims made this Day of Thanks permanent. A proclamation attributed to Governor Bradford instructed his fellow Pilgrims to "render Thanksgiving to ye Almighty God for all His blessings."

Today, like the Pilgrims, we also live in a time of uncertainty and danger but, likewise, we have much for which to be thankful.

Too many young Americans will spend this holiday in harm's way, protecting our country and the values we hold dear. Yet, I am thankful that we have the best, the bravest, and the most determined armed forces in the world.

I am thankful to live in a country that can confront a crisis with strength and with moral certitude.

I am thankful that in the United States our form of government provides for the transfer of power peacefully.

Finally, I am thankful for those men and women who, 388 years ago, had the courage, the faith, and the devotion to God to undertake the most difficult and dangerous of journeys simply to be able to go to church.

November 19, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

An Economic Recovery Involves Helping Our Neighbors

When I was growing up in the coalfields of southern West Virginia, I remember listening to President Franklin Roosevelt's "fireside chats" and messages of hope during the dark days of the Great Depression and World War II. In one statement proposing aid to England in its war against Nazi Germany, President Roosevelt asked his listeners to suppose that their neighbor's house was on fire, and that the listeners had a length of garden hose. The good neighbor would certainly lend his hose because he would not want the fire to spread to his own house.

I have been thinking about that analogy as it relates to the auto industry's request for a \$25 billion loan. Like many West Virginians, I question the wisdom and fairness of such a loan, but I also must consider the consequences of inaction. The downfall of the auto industry would ignite a massive fire that would spread from house to house.

In the eastern panhandle, a General Motors Service Parts Operation employs 165 workers with a nearly \$12 million annual payroll. That facility services 65 auto dealerships in West Virginia, creates business for truckers, railroad workers, maintenance personnel, and groundskeepers. We know these hard-working men and women as our

neighbors and friends. We sit with them at church on Sunday and visit with them at the grocery store. Their houses are on fire and they need our help. To deny them a garden hose when we are able to lend one goes against the Christian principles I learned during those hard years of the Great Depression and World War II.

Helping our neighbors also means extending unemployment benefits for those who cannot find work. It means ensuring Medicaid coverage for the impoverished and elderly, and investing in our transportation and energy infrastructure so that West Virginians can continue to build their communities.

I have introduced legislation in the Senate that would help the millions of Americans hurt by the current economic recession. The legislation would also provide a loan to the auto industry with provisions that will allow us to replace our garden hose when the fire ceases. I believe this bill, which is crafted to protect taxpayers and jobs in West Virginia, is a step in the right direction.

The conditions of our economy have sparked a fire that is spreading to our neighbors' houses. Now is the time to heed President Roosevelt's call. We must lend our garden hose, not stand idly by watching the houses burn, hoping the embers blow away.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Yes, *West* Virginia, There is a Santa Claus!

Christmas is coming. I can feel it. There is no other feeling like it. As the song says, it is the "most wonderful time of the year."

And, as another song says, "it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas."

Everywhere we look we can see the signs of Christmas: Christmas trees, Christmas wreaths, silver bells on lamp posts, women wearing Christmas sweaters and men wearing Christmas ties. We see Christmas carolers and hear Christmas carols, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come."

And then, there is one of the most recognized and cherished symbols of Christmas -- Santa Claus. I just love the jolly old fat man. To me, Santa represents Christmas, happy children, sleigh bells, reindeer, and, of course, presents.

In some circles, nowadays, it is popular to be critical of Jolly Old Saint Nick. For one thing, he is often attacked for being overweight, which is unhealthy. No argument here; Santa would be a better role model for our children if he went on a diet, joined a health club, and got rid of a few pounds.

Santa is also denounced as the very symbol of the commercialization of Christmas. Perhaps. During the Christmas season, commercials saturate our television screens urging us to buy, buy, buy. Store windows feature Christmas displays that tantalize and taunt, and beckon us to come inside and spend money. These highly commercial aspects of Christmas always seem to feature, in one way or another, Santa Claus. But I prefer to see the glass as half full!

The commercialization of Christmas, though taken too far at times, is really an extension of

the tradition of giving, with roots that reach back to the wise men and a manger in Bethlehem, which means that gift giving can actually be viewed as a celebration of the birth of Jesus -- which is, of course, the reason for the Christmas season. In other words, all of those gaudy and tacky displays and commercials would not be there were it not for the birth of Jesus. Think about it. Gifts don't have to be expensive. They can be simple. They can be homemade. But, they are expressions of love. Enjoy them!

I believe that the spirit of Kris Kringle can also represent some of the best of American religious values, including love, justice, fairness, and forgiveness. Fanciful and exuberant, joyful, cheerful, and happy, Santa Claus symbolizes our highest ideals, including the innocence of childhood, selfless giving, and boundless affection. Regardless of whatever faults he may have, Santa also represents the best in all of us. Especially in bleak economic times, the joy which Santa and his reindeer bring to children and adults alike can be counted on to brighten home and hearth throughout the season.

A few years ago, an Associated Press poll found that nearly 90 percent of Americans believed in Santa Claus as a child, and almost two-thirds of Americans with children at home consider Santa an important part of their holiday celebrations. Political leaders should strive for such an approval rating!

The story of Jesus is a story of faith, love, optimism, wonder, goodness and the eternal life of the soul.

Santa is indeed the spirit of Christmas

Yes, *West* Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Art of Giving

A personal expression of love or gratitude is joyous to give, especially when the gift is met with a radiant smile from the recipient. Perhaps no other time of the year is more symbolic of the pleasure of gift-giving than Christmas.

Each Christmas, many West Virginians recall the first gift of Christmas: God's love delivered to mankind as a newborn baby. Shepherds and Magi honored the Savior with gifts symbolizing Jesus' virtue, faith and empathy for human suffering. Centuries later, God's gift continues to bestow hope, respect, and purpose in our lives.

In modern times gift-giving has become more complicated. There is endless advice about the "perfect" gift, with plenty of opportunities to purchase it everywhere you turn. This year, I call to mind the guidance of the seventeenth-century author, Gracián, who offered this advice: *The great art of giving consists in this: the gift should cost very little and yet be greatly coveted, so that it may be the more highly appreciated.* So many of us can find solace in this advice whenever we are feeling overwhelmed by commercial advertising and the pressure to spend, spend, spend this holiday season.

Recently, I was deeply touched to learn about a Wheeling congregation whose good deeds truly

embody the Christmas spirit. The congregation sought and found a way to give the gift of mobility – in the form of a wheelchair – to those who are poor and physically disabled in countries around the world. Members of the church, along with their community, have partnered with a national organization to supply very low-cost wheelchairs (under \$50) to impoverished children and adults.

For the recipients, a wheelchair means the end of their isolation, and the hope of renewed productivity and self-esteem. The caregivers of the disabled benefit as well. Many have spent a lifetime carrying and transporting their children, grandmothers and neighbors, and now have relief from this tremendous burden.

It is estimated that more than 100 million people around the world – of all ages – are in need of a wheelchair but cannot afford one. The need is great, so that is why the recipients of this gift greet their wheelchair with a radiant smile and the anticipation of a more mobile and free lifestyle.

During this Christmas season, I encourage all West Virginians to seek other great stories of faith, compassion and humanity to guide us in our search for the "perfect" gift. May you share an abundance of God's blessing in this Holy Christmas season.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Frosty the Snowman Was a West Virginian!

One of my favorite sounds of the season is "Frosty the Snowman." This joyful song tells about a snowman who comes to life thanks to a magical hat that some children find and place on his head. Frosty plays with the children for a while before he is "hurried on his way"--that is, he melts under a hot sun. But he reassures the saddened children not to worry because, "I'll be back again someday."

I wonder how many West Virginians know that this Christmas classic was written by a West Virginian, Walter "Jack" Rollins! Mr. Rollins was born in Keyser on September 15, 1906. He left Mineral County to work in a glass factory in Pittsburgh, and eventually found his way to Hollywood where he lived for 30 years. He authored about 500 songs, including other classics like "Peter Cottontail" (1949) and "Smokey the Bear" (1952).

It was in 1950 that Rollins wrote "Frosty the Snowman" while Steve Nelson provided the music. The song was first recorded by Gene Autry that same year. Since then, it has been recorded by many famous artists including Nat King Cole, Ella Fitzgerald, Alvin and the Chipmunks, Jimmy Durante, and Johnny Mathis.

Mr. Rollins died January 1, 1972, and is

buried in Keyser.

So, this Christmas season, whenever you hear the wonderful, happy song that Mr. Rollins wrote about a frozen playmate, take pride in the fact that Frosty the Snowman was a West Virginian.

A few of the lyrics to this classic holiday song follow:

"Frosty the snowman
was a jolly happy soul,
With a corncob pipe
and a button nose,
And two eyes made
out of coal."

"Frosty the snowman
is a fairy tale, they say,
He was made of snow
but the children know how
he came to life one day."

"There must have been
some magic in that Old
silk hat they found. For
when they placed it on his
head,

He began to dance
around."

"Frosty the snowman
knew

The sun was hot that
day,

So he said, 'Let's run
and we'll have some fun
now before I melt away.'"

"Down to the village,
With a broomstick in
his hand,

Running here and
there all

Around the square
saying,

Catch me if you can."

Merry Christmas West
Virginia! May all your
Christmas wishes come
true.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

2008 – A Year of Accomplishments for WV

2008 has marked the completion of many major federal construction projects that have been top priorities of mine for years in the U.S. Senate. The projects that have come to fruition this year include:

Infrastructure

- The new Marmet Lock on the Kanawha River is the culmination of a ten-year long effort. The finished product will allow West Virginia's products to get to market in a much more timely and safe manner.
- The Blennerhassett Bridge in Parkersburg; which also marked the completion of ADHS Corridor D and the beginning of enhanced safety, reduced commutes, and new economic development opportunities for West Virginians. Work on Corridor D in West Virginia began all the way back in 1965.

Medical and Research Facilities

- The new Biomedical Research Center at West Virginia University; which will allow WVU to recruit faculty scientists of national caliber, better compete for research funds, and make huge strides in helping those afflicted by life-threatening diseases. This project began in 2005.
- The Health Sciences Learning Center at WVU; which is serving students in the four health professions schools of the Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences Center. I have proudly supported this project since 1999.
- A new clinical center at Marshall University's Robert C. Byrd Center for Rural Health, which I have supported since 1993, will be the new home for clinical training for students/residents; primary and specialty care clinical services for the region; and a new heart institute.
- A new WVU clinical teaching center within the Charleston Area Medical Center (CAMC) Memorial Hospital campus that will improve health care education and services in the Kanawha Valley region. I funded this project in a 2004 Appropriations bill.

Expansion of Federal Facilities

- A new Firing Range Complex at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Advanced Training Center in Harpers Ferry. The new complex is more important than ever for the law enforcement officers who guard the nation's borders because it allows them to receive specialized training to help them succeed in their critical homeland security mission. I have been supporting the CBP's efforts for over 8 years.
- Three new centers at the Allegany Ballistics Laboratory in Rocket Center. These investments will provide the Department of Defense with an improved capability to support U.S. military forces now and into the future. I have supported the ABL facility dating back to 1985.
- The Technology Support Facility in Morgantown, which will support the National Energy Technology Laboratory's (NETL) mission of advancing science and technology for a clean, secure energy future. Over several years, I have added over \$36 million for this project.

After years – in some cases, decades – of hard work, it is wonderful to see these projects become a reality. They will not only serve the public good, but also help to create jobs and strengthen West Virginia's economy for years to come. 2008 has been a banner year. Rest assured, in 2009, there is much more to come from this United States Senator!

December 24, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

WELCOMING A NEW YEAR

As the clock ticks its final hours towards the beginning of the New Year, I like to take time to recall the joys of the recent year and, like so many of you, to make those annual New Year's resolutions – many of which for better or worse I find hard to keep.

The celebration of the beginning of a New Year dates back about 4000 years to ancient Babylon. Under the old Roman calendar, the New Year began sometime in the month of March, anticipating the coming of spring – a season of rebirth – and a time for the planting of crops. The Roman senate in 153 BC declared January 1 to be the beginning of the new calendar year. According to Judeo-Christian tradition, New Year's Day is observed as the Feast of Christ's Circumcision, eight days after His birth. January 1 has been given the name of the Feast of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, by the Catholic Church.

The celebration of the New Year was traditionally a religious feast and to this day many people believe that certain foods will bring them good luck, prosperity and good health throughout the coming year. In many regions throughout our country, the traditional meal of pork and black-eyed peas is eaten for good luck.

Others believe that cabbage – the leaves of which are considered a sign of prosperity – or rice bring good fortune in the New Year.

Celebrations on the eve of the New Year, now December 31, have become major events throughout the world. From Sydney to London to New York City, crowds gather to watch grandiose fireworks displays, parades, and the dropping of the crystal ball in Times Square as people cheer the outgoing year and welcome the new. At the stroke of midnight, many celebrants lock arms and join in singing, *Auld Lang Syne*, which translated means "times gone by."

As the new year unfolds throughout the world, millions attend religious services, watch parades and football games, or spend precious time with family and friends and, yes even a few brave souls actually take a swim in cold bodies of water to cleanse their spirits for the upcoming year.

However you choose to celebrate the New Year, please do so safely. My fellow West Virginians, as we welcome 2009, I resolve to continue to be the kind of United States Senator which our State deserves. Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving you. Happy New Year West Virginia.

December 31, 2008



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Blessings of Democracy

On January 20, 2009, the world will witness a rare political act - - the peaceful transfer of power from one world leader to the next. In a demonstration of the strength of our representative democracy, outgoing President Bush will travel with President-elect Obama from the White House to the Capitol. There, on the West Front of the Capitol, President Bush will witness the swearing-in and inaugural address of President Obama before quietly departing from the Capitol's East Front to resume life as a private citizen.

The basic elements of the inauguration are simple, but the symbolism of the day is momentous. Only one element is spelled out in the Constitution: the Presidential oath of office, in Article II, Section 1: "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Tradition dictates that the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court administers the oath of office to the President. The recitation of the oath may involve placing a hand on a Bible or other book, or no book at all. President-elect Obama will take his oath on the same Bible used by Abraham Lincoln for his swearing in on

March 4, 1861. The location may also vary: Presidents have been sworn in at ten different locations over the course of our nation's history - from Philadelphia to Love Field in Dallas in 1963, following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Some Presidents have held inaugural balls, but not all - President Franklin Pierce cancelled the balls in 1853 and they were suspended again from 1913 to 1949. Worship services, inaugural luncheons, parades and even inaugural addresses are but mere traditions that have existed or been added over the years.

Americans and others watching from around the world will see plenty of pageantry, pomp and circumstance on Inauguration Day. There may even be peaceful protests, affirming every American's right to freely express their views.

Our Constitution provides a stable and reliable way for citizens to effect the changes they seek in their government, through regular and fair elections and through a justice system designed to preserve and protect individual rights. As Americans gather to watch the stately unfolding of events that mark the Presidential inauguration, they will witness both the blessings of our Constitutional system and its promise to the world.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

From Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. To President Barack Obama

In 1954, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., began his pastorship at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, in Montgomery, Alabama. At that time, African Americans could not serve on juries in most areas in the south, nor could they drink from certain water fountains, or eat in certain restaurants. Black people could not live in many neighborhoods in the north as well as in the south. Although the U.S. Supreme Court had ordered the integration of schools, in many parts of our country, schools remained segregated. Incredibly, in too many parts of our country, African Americans could not exercise their basic American right to vote!

The next year, in Montgomery, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. Dr. King reacted to this event by organizing a movement to desegregate the city's bus system and a revolution began — it would be one of the most transforming movements in history, and the participants did it without firing a shot.

The effort to advance desegregation included sit-ins, boycotts, marches, and other forms of non-violent protests. While violence was often committed against the revolutionaries, they remained true to Reverend King's philosophy of non-violence. King's non-violent tactics often seemed strange to his followers as well as to his critics, but as King explained, the goal was not "to defeat" the adversary, but to "convert" him.

King's movement was dedicated

not only to eliminating segregation, but winning civil rights, equality, and equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race or economic class. For that reason, labor unionists and other social activists joined in his march on Washington in August, 1963 which was officially titled the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom."

And now, on January 20, 2009, Barack Obama will become the first African American to become President of the United States.

It is appropriate that he will take the oath of office the day after the nation celebrates Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, because this will be the fulfillment of Dr. King's Dream. In his "I Have A Dream" address, King said that he dreamed that "one day" his children would "live in a nation where they would be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

President Obama was elected because Americans listened to his ideas, and were attracted to his vision of America, as a "More Perfect Union." They took the measure of the content of Barack Obama's character, and used their right to vote to usher in a new era of governance.

I congratulate President Obama. But, I also want to salute the contributions of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King raised the consciousness of the Nation. He established a new moral standard for how we, as Americans, should view and treat each other. He sowed the seed for the historic achievement of President Obama.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Half Century of Senate Service

Thanks to the good people of West Virginia, and with God's blessings, I was able to mark a half century of service in the United States Senate when we convened for the 111th Congress on January 6th. I have been fortunate that the foster son of an impoverished coal miner from the hills of southern West Virginia has had the opportunity to not only serve the people of the Mountain State, but also to walk with Kings, meet with Prime Ministers, and debate Presidents.

During the past 50 years, I have had the unique opportunity to witness history and participate in many history-making events. From the apex of the Cold War to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall; from my opposition to the 1964 Civil Rights Act to my role in securing the funds for the building of the memorial to Martin Luther King, Jr.; and from my support for the War in Vietnam to my opposition to Mr. Bush's War in Iraq, I have served in the Senate and I have relished every minute of it.

My half century has also allowed me to experience profound changes in the Senate itself, and, unfortunately, not all of them have been positive. During my tenure, especially in recent years, the Senate has become bitterly partisan. The costs of running for a Senate

seat have become astronomical. In 1958, Jennings Randolph and I spent a combined \$50,000 to win the two Senate seats in West Virginia. Today, Senators can expect to spend about \$7 million. Too much of a lawmaker's time and energy are now consumed in raising money for the next election.

But, I am pleased to say there have been many positive changes in the Senate. It has become more open and more constituent friendly and Americans across the country can watch their Senators debate the issues of the day live on C-Span.

The Senate has also become more diverse. When I started in 1959, there was only one female Senator. Today, there are 17. In the 50 years prior to my service, not a single African American was elected to the Senate. During my 50 years here, three African Americans have been elected to the Senate. While I know this is a small number, one of those three has now been elected to the highest office in our land -- President of the United States. We have come a very long way.

My beloved West Virginians, it has been a wonderful and privileged 50 years serving you in the Senate. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for this honor and I look forward to the next 50!!

January 21, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Closing Guantanamo

President Obama, in one of his first official acts, has issued an executive order to close the U.S. military detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, within twelve months and after a careful case-by-case review of each remaining detainee. It is an action long overdue, ending a dark period in American history that leaves a stain on our nation's faith in the rule of law and undermines our standing in the world.

Since October 7, 2001, when the current war in Afghanistan began, almost 800 individuals have been imprisoned at Guantanamo. Approximately 250 remain today. Captured abroad and suspected or accused of terrorist activities or connections, the detainees were taken to Guantanamo, outside U.S. territory, to minimize the application of legal constraints that might otherwise apply on U.S. soil.

A mere handful of these detainees, officially deemed unlawful "enemy combatants" outside the protections afforded by the Geneva Convention, have never even been charged with any crimes. The remainder have been held indefinitely, as long as seven years, without trial. More than a handful are believed to have been subjected to "enhanced interrogation techniques," a Bush Administration euphemism for torture. Of the more than 500 individuals transferred out of Guantanamo, most were released soon after their repatriation. In very few cases did the receiving countries

consider that the prosecution of the individuals was merited.

At home and abroad questions over what has happened at Guantanamo have been repeatedly raised from citizens to prominent legislators. The United Nations referred to the practices at Guantanamo as a "human rights scandal." One human rights organization referred to the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp as "the gulag of our times." Many in Congress, myself among them, have pressed for the closure of the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp and insisted that these individuals be treated as we would expect our soldiers to be treated if captured abroad and subjected to the rule of law – no more, and no less.

While I believe it is past time to close Guantanamo and bring those who remain to justice, if appropriate and within the jurisdiction of U.S. law, we must undertake this endeavor with extreme caution. There may be some detainees who, for national security reasons, may be too dangerous to be released. And questions have already arisen as to where to hold these individuals on U.S. shores as they await trial or deportation.

The Obama Administration has indicated that they will establish a number of Cabinet-level task forces to address many of the major issues surrounding the closure of the facility, the procedures to be followed, and the legalities involved. It is a welcome and long overdue action.

January 28, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A Healthy Resolution

For many of us, the intention to lead a healthier lifestyle tops the list of New Year's resolutions for 2009. We are prepared to make up for the missed doctor's appointments from 2008, and dust off our gym shoes and get our bodies moving.

But as the year progresses and the responsibilities of work and family overwhelm our daily schedules, we have to recommit to our New Year's resolution. Taking care of our bodies should be a priority, and with minimal effort and some organization it can become a regular habit. When we tend to our health on a regular basis, with a combination of regular check-ups, screenings, and exercise, we can more easily prevent the onset of chronic disease.

During the last few years West Virginians have skyrocketed to the top of chronic health categories. Whether it is hypertension, diabetes, heart disease and stroke, or various cancers, West Virginians have found themselves dealing with the upswing of health problems in greater proportion to the national average. Although this is a troubling situation, there are some simple steps we can take together to begin reversing our state's health care downturn.

The steps to a healthier lifestyle begin with exercise and proper nutrition. It is equally important to incorporate regular doctors' visits

and preventative health care screenings into a health care routine. Research has shown that preventative screenings, which search for potential health complications, can save lives. Even the healthiest individuals, after a primary screening, can find themselves in need of treatment for a number of health problems.

West Virginians are fortunate to have several preventative medical facilities that I helped fund throughout the state. For example, Marshall University School of Medicine now has a virtual colonoscopy program that was established to fight the high rate of colon cancer. West Virginia University's Positron Emission Tomography (PET) Scanner is a powerful imaging technique that holds great promise in the diagnosis and treatment of many diseases, particularly cancer. Those are just a few of the great resources West Virginians can utilize to help prevent the onset of chronic or life-threatening disease.

This year, I encourage all West Virginians to make a commitment to their overall health and honor this important New Year's resolution. I cannot stress how beneficial a few visits to your doctor may be. Coupled with a few brisk walks each week, these small steps can lead to a longer and more productive lifestyle.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

HAPPY 200TH BIRTHDAY PRESIDENT LINCOLN

On February 12, 2009, the nation will celebrate Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday. In many ways Lincoln's presidency was symbolic. He was Father Abraham. He was the Great Emancipator. He was the Savior of the Union. He was, by almost any measure, one of our greatest presidents.

Lincoln was the president who led our country through its most severe crisis, the American Civil War. With his Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln was the president who set our nation on course to finally abolish the institution of slavery.

Our country owes so much to the 16th president of the United States – and so does the State of West Virginia!

The creation of the State of West Virginia was a controversial matter, but President Lincoln's strong support for statehood led to the creation of our beloved state. In Article IV, Section 3, the Constitution stipulates that a state cannot be created from another state without the consent of the concerned states and Congress. The question of whether the State of Virginia had actually given the required consent was a concern. In both houses of Congress, the admission of West Virginia into the Union encountered fierce opposition. Lincoln's own Cabinet was evenly divided on the question. In other words, the admission

of West Virginia as a state may never have happened without Lincoln's support.

This great man who had so much influence on our state and nation often discussed the major influences in his own life. One was his religion. During a time of pain and mental anguish, for example, Lincoln wrote that he found reading the Bible to be "the best cure for the blues."

Another influence, he explained, was his mother. Lincoln was born in 1809 to Nancy Hanks and Thomas Lincoln. "God bless my mother;" Lincoln told his law partner, "all that I am or ever hope to be I owe to her." I am very proud to point out that his mother, Nancy Hanks, was a West Virginian!

Hanks is believed to have been born on February 5, 1784, in what is now Mineral County. A replica cabin and a stone memorial identify the reported site of her birth along Mike's Run at the foot of New Creek Mountain.

As we celebrate the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth, let a grateful state remember Lincoln's instrumental role in the creation of West Virginia. President's Lincoln faith in God, and reverence for the idea of one America make his greatness eternal. How proud our State should be that his mother, Nancy Hanks, is a daughter of Mineral County, West Virginia.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

STIMULATING OUR ECONOMY

These are perilous times for our nation's economy. Companies are shedding jobs at an alarming rate. Nearly 2 million Americans have lost their jobs in the last three months, and job creation is the worst in 75 years. While in West Virginia our workforce has been buffered to some degree by the mining industry, we are now feeling the impact of this painful global recession. In December – in just one month – West Virginia lost 4,100 jobs.

Companies that have a long tradition in the Mountain State are reducing their workforce or closing doors altogether: Century Aluminum, Dow Chemical, AGC Flat Glass, Greenbrier Resort Hotel and Simonton Windows are just a few of the companies that have had to make hard decisions about their future and the future of hard-working West Virginians.

The recession to date has created a \$3.6 trillion economic gap over the next five years. This is coupled with the \$2.2 trillion deficit in infrastructure investments that the Bush Administration left to this nation. Highway and mass transit systems, airport and rail construction, energy and water projects, schools and public facilities were starved under the previous Administration. In West Virginia, I have seen how inadequate infrastructure can limit access to jobs, to health care, and to schools. It can strangle and suffocate local economies.

Last week Congress passed and the President has subsequently signed into law "The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act," which is expected to jumpstart our idling economy and help create up to 20,000 jobs in West Virginia. Money in this bill for West Virginia will immediately address needed infrastructure repairs, including the backlog of drinking and clean water infrastructure needs and over \$200 million in highway and mass transit funding for "shovel-ready" projects.

For those who are unemployed or facing job loss, the bill contains money to help match unemployed workers with new job opportunities and provide new job training programs. And the Department of Labor estimates that West Virginia could receive more than \$33 million in extended unemployment insurance benefits. And many Social Security beneficiaries, SSI recipients and disabled veterans will see a stimulus check in their mailboxes to help make ends meet.

"The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act" that was signed into law is what we need to be doing to help mitigate this economic downturn. It achieves the principle goals of creating and saving jobs, of cutting taxes for working families, of helping to aid those who are out of work, and of investing in the long-term growth of the U.S. economy.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

RESCUE UNDER FIRE.... SO OTHERS MIGHT LIVE

Military medics on the ground and the medical evacuation flight teams who bring wounded soldiers to hospitals are true heroes. They are lifesavers who put their own lives on the line in order to give wounded comrades the chance to receive critical medical care.

Over the years, the valor of those who serve as field medics, Army Medivac crews and Air Force Combat Search and Rescue crews has often been overlooked. These brave men and women – pilots, aircraft crew chiefs and medical specialists – work in the heat of battle to evacuate the injured. They are frequently exposed to danger from which there is no protection. Undaunted, they do their lifesaving tasks without hesitation. Our forces deployed on the battlefield rely upon these angels of mercy. Such brave efforts save the lives and limbs of fellow soldiers. And they also provide comfort to the families of our brave troops, who can rest assured that their loved ones in uniform will have the very best medical care when and where they need it most.

I was shocked to learn several months ago that U.S. troops in Afghanistan were being asked to fight in remote areas, which could result in delays of two hours

or more until first-line surgical care became available. Subsequently, I learned that this deplorable situation was allowed to continue unremedied for an extended period of time.

I immediately urged Secretary of Defense Gates to improve the efficiency of medical evacuations in Afghanistan by deploying the necessary resources as quickly as possible. I was pleased to hear Secretary Gates address my concerns during his testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on January 27, 2009. Secretary Gates assured the Committee that he was working to significantly improve medivac capabilities in Afghanistan.

I have since learned that additional medivac assets and forward surgical teams will soon arrive in Afghanistan. The presence of these additional resources will shorten the time between actual injury and critical medical care. Our hearts go out to these brave crews along with our prayers for their own safety. A grateful nation thanks them for the courage that they display to keep their comrades in arms safe and sound.

I will continue to monitor the progress being made in getting these necessary forces to Afghanistan in the most rapid manner possible.

February 25, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG OUR YOUTH CAUSE FOR ALARM

I recently met with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and expressed my grave concerns about drug and alcohol use and abuse by West Virginia's youth. Each year, more than 70,000 underage children in West Virginia consume alcohol. Forty-two percent of high-school students have admitted to drinking, and nearly thirty percent of these students are binge drinkers. Binge drinking is defined as the consumption of alcohol with the sole purpose of becoming intoxicated.

West Virginia exceeds the national rates for cocaine usage in age groups of twelve to seventeen and eighteen to twenty-five, and sixty percent of our high school students have said that drugs are kept, used, or sold at school. In fact, West Virginia is among the ten states with the highest rates of illegal use of prescription drugs and cocaine in the past year.

This substance use and abuse by our children can mean serious health issues, or even death. Think of the tragedy of these young lives wasted! But there are other costs as well. Providing police officers to enforce our drug laws, imprisoning offenders, and rehabilitating those who become addicted to substances all cost taxpayers money. In addition, substance abuse reduces one's chances of graduating from school or of landing and holding a steady job. In 2006 alone, substance abuse cost West Virginia \$1.8 billion in direct and indirect costs.

Curing substance abuse is not something that Secretary Duncan or I can solve with federal funding or legislation alone. The key to reducing youth substance abuse is parental involvement. Parents need to tend to their children and constantly reinforce the value of an education. They need to alert their children to the permanent damage that drugs and alcohol can do to young bodies. They need to concentrate on being good role models and on providing positive and productive examples of how to live a healthy, successful, responsible life. Parents need to talk to school officials about drugs and alcohol in our schools and about prevention efforts at the local level.

My meeting with Secretary Duncan was heartening because I believe that the new Secretary is well aware of the pervasiveness of substance abuse among our young people. It will take a lot of work and cooperation, but West Virginians must come to grips with the profound danger of substance abuse and join the fight to find solutions. There is a growing epidemic in our state which involves a long list of problems, including crime, disease, child abuse, domestic violence, teen pregnancy, welfare dependency, learning disabilities, and poor performance in school. My staff and I are learning all we can about this major problem in our state. For the sake of your children, perhaps you should too.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

SAINT PATRICK'S DAY, 2009

"Top o' the mornin' to ye, my fellow West Virginians!" Or, better yet, "to my fellow Irish-West Virginians."

So many of us look forward to the one day each year – March 17, St. Patrick's Day – when we can all proclaim ourselves to be "Irish for a day."

Celebrated by the wearing of green clothing, the playing of Irish music and the eating of Irish foods like corn beef and cabbage, St. Patrick's Day is a most delightful annual observation.

The Irish have observed the day as a religious occasion for over a thousand years. It was on March 17, AD 461, that St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, died.

As the people of Ireland traveled outside the Emerald Isle, the day came to be celebrated around the world in a number of different ways. The St. Patrick's Day custom came to America in 1737, when the day was celebrated in Boston. The first St. Patrick's Day parade was in New York City on March 17, 1762. Today, many cities in the United States celebrate the day with huge parades. Some paint their city streets green. The city of Chicago dyes the Chicago River green. And the community of Ireland, in Lewis County, annually hosts an all-out

multi-day festival, complete with harp-playing, road bowling, a King and Queen to rein over the festivities, and plenty of blarney.

On St. Patrick's Day, Irish themes and symbols abound. Everywhere, we see shamrocks – the three-leaved plant that St. Patrick was supposed to have used to explain the Holy Trinity to pre-Christian Irish. Also called the "seamroy" in Ireland, the shamrock was a sacred plant in ancient Ireland because it symbolized the rebirth of spring, just the way the ramp does in West Virginia. By the seventeenth century, the shamrock had become a symbol of emerging Irish nationalism.

At any rate, put on some green clothes, eat a bowl of Irish stew, hunt for a rainbow's end, and try to spot a Leprechaun or two because, as the song says, "It's a great day for the Irish!"

On this Saint Patrick's Day, I leave you with this old "Irish blessing":

May the road rise to meet you,

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face,

The rains fall soft upon your fields.

And until we meet again,

May God hold you in the palm of his hand.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

West Virginia Women Make History!

The women of West Virginia have played important roles not only in the history of our beloved state, but also in the history of our great nation. Therefore, with March being celebrated as "Women's History Month," I want to acknowledge some great West Virginia women and their contributions.

In the days before West Virginia was officially a state, women like Anne Bailey and Betty Zane served as scouts and messengers, and, at times, participated in the fighting of the colonial Indian Wars and the American Revolution.

During the Civil War, Nancy Hart and Belle Boyd carried on espionage work for the Confederates. Another West Virginian, Nancy Hanks of Mineral County, married Thomas Lincoln, and had a baby boy she named Abraham, who served as our 16th President during the Civil War.

When the industrial revolution swept the country, West Virginia women crusaded as union organizers. "Mother" Jones and Fannie Sellins, for example, both played crucial roles in organizing the miners of West Virginia.

In the twentieth century, West Virginia women made their marks as public servants. In 1928, Minnie Buckingham Harper of McDowell County took a seat in the West Virginia House of Delegates, making her the first African-American woman in the United States to serve in a legislative body. In 1969, Virginia

Mae Brown of Charleston became the first woman to chair a United States regulatory commission, the Interstate Commerce Commission.

The women of West Virginia have also enriched the cultural life of our country. In 1908, largely because of the efforts of Anna Jarvis, the first official Mother's Day service in the United States was held in St. Andrews Methodist Church in Grafton. Ida Reed of Barbour County published more than 2,000 Christian Hymns. Ellen King of Glenville, wrote "The West Virginia Hills," which became one of our official state songs.

Our mountains have produced several notable female authors. Pearl S. Buck, the author of 85 books, including *The Good Earth*, which was awarded the 1932 Pulitzer Prize, is certainly the best-known of these. In 1938, Pearl Buck became the first American woman to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature.

But, we must not forget all those unnamed women who have toiled in our coal camps, worked on our farms, labored in our factories, taught in our school rooms, and managed family life in the homes of our state. While their names may not be in history books, many women have played an important part in the economic and social life of our state. This month let us remember the contributions of all of our West Virginia women, past and present. They are the guardians of our West Virginia ways. God bless them all.

March 18, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Whither Iraq and Afghanistan?

March 19, 2009, marked the sixth anniversary of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. Since March 2003, when -- despite my warnings -- President Bush initiated a pre-emptive war to destroy non-existent weapons of mass destruction, 4,260 American troops have lost their lives in Iraq, and more than \$700 billion in taxpayers dollars have been drained from the U.S. economy.

Today, the outcome is still in question. Difficult issues involving corruption, refugees, oil profits and Kurdish autonomy are unresolved. We have been told that the surge was a dramatic success, but nearly 150,000 troops remain in Iraq to maintain so-called "stability." Is this really success? The Pentagon continues to wear down active duty forces and rely on reserve and National Guard components and the practice of "stop loss." We have been training Iraqi soldiers for years. When will they be ready? Will Iraq be a stable force in the region and a reliable partner in the war on terror? These important questions underlie our presence in Iraq. The lack of answers is of grave concern.

The White House says that combat forces will remain in Iraq through August 2010, and up to 50,000

troops will be required until December 31, 2011, training Iraqis and protecting U.S. citizens and assets. We will be called upon to pour more billions of dollars into Iraq at a time when many Americans are hurting. Amid an economic crisis, the U.S. continues to shoulder the vast economic and military burden in Iraq, and there are no statutory guarantees that the President will adhere to the timelines.

Meanwhile, after over seven years of floundering policy and 671 American troops killed, stability in Afghanistan remains threatened. I await clarification from President Obama about a strategic policy for that region. Is the principal objective to capture Osama bin Laden and defeat al Qaeda, or to supplant the Taliban? Is our objective to turn Afghanistan into a successful state and develop a partner in the war on terrorism? How long will it take and what will it cost?

As for the brave men and women of our Armed Forces who served and are still serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, history has already judged them heroes. In the finest American tradition, they have served bravely and with great valor, and often with great sacrifice. To each of them, and to their families, we can only say, "Thank you."

March 25, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The First Sign of Spring — The Mighty Ramp!

West Virginia is indeed the Land of the Mighty Ramp! This is a little best appreciated by actually taking part in the annual pursuit of this stinky, but delightfully tasty spring tonic.

Ramps are a member of the lily family, which includes garlic, leeks, and onions. While they grow wild in hardwood forests throughout North America, ramps thrive in the mountains and valleys of Appalachia. In our beloved state, eating ramps is an annual rite of spring and it is an honored tradition.

West Virginians know that ramps are among the first green things to emerge from the forest floor in spring; therefore, all "real" West Virginians consider the ramp, not the robin, to be the first sign of spring.

Ramps are such innocent looking things, with their broad, smooth light green leaves, and scallion-like bulbs, that newcomers to ramp culture will be surprised by the pungent odor they possess.

I am told that the popularity of these little stinkers has skyrocketed in recent years and ramps are now being eaten with gusto all over the United States. As usual, West Virginia was ahead of the rest of the country. The April issue of *Bon Appétit* food and cooking magazine even has a special feature on ramps. I have read that

in New York City, ramps are sold in gourmet shops and are eaten on pizza and in quiche.

Real men may or may not eat quiche, but "real" West Virginians know ramps go well with many different things, especially taters, eggs, ham, brown beans, and steak. And "real" West Virginians know ramps do not belong on pizzas or, heaven forbid, in quiche. And "real" ramp eaters do not buy ramps in gourmet shops. We dig them out of the ground ourselves, or we buy them from roadside stands, or we go to local ramp feeds.

Every spring, ramp festivals are celebrated all over West Virginia. The towns of Buckhannon, Chloe, Pickens, Big Otter, Helvetia, Elkins, Hacker Valley, Parkersburg, Roanoke, Mathias, Bomont, and Romney all sponsor ramp festivals. But, the King of Ramp Festivals has to be Richwood, which is also known as the "Ramp Capital of the World." A few years ago, public television aired a documentary entitled, "The King of Stink," a documentary on ramp festivals that featured the Richwood Ramp Festival.

A friend of mine once said to me that, "enjoying ramps in the springtime is what life is all about."

I say to one and all, spring is here. Go get a plate full of ramps and enjoy life!



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

"Easter's On Its Way!"

Easter's on its way! What a wonderful and joyous time of year this is. It is celebrated with Easter eggs and Easter baskets; Easter rabbits and chocolate bunnies; Easter dresses and Easter bonnets; and jelly beans and songs.

The people of our state can take special pride in knowing that it was a West Virginian, Mr. Jack Rollins of Keyser (1906-1973), who composed what has become one of the most popular and beloved Easter songs, "Peter Cottontail." I just love those happy, joyful lyrics that tell of the Easter Rabbit "hopping down the bunny trail." The beautiful lyrics of this happy Easter song give their attention to Peter Cottontail, who is "bringing every girl and boy, baskets full of Easter joy."

*"He's got jellybeans for
Tommy,
Colored eggs for sister Sue,
There's an orchid for your
Mommy
And an Easter bonnet, too."*

But the most important thing is that, wherever he goes, the Easter Bunny showers his blessings on all people.

I like to think that this is a happy, joyous time of year for all of West Virginia's children.

But we must never forget, as they say of Christmas, the "real reason for

the joy." For Christians, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the essence of our religion. The birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ are the premier events in world history. Christians all over the world celebrate this most sacred and holy Easter season.

But, I urge my fellow West Virginians who are of the Christian faith to think about the true meaning of the suffering and resurrection of Christ more often than just at Easter. I believe that Christians should try to take at least a few minutes of each day to meditate about what the resurrection event means to each of us personally, and what it has meant to mankind.

Let us read the powerful message found in Luke 24: 1-3 (KJV) often.

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus."

Happy Easter to all and may you enjoy God's holy blessings during this Easter season and throughout the year.

April 9, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

PROMISES TO KEEP

When members of the military ship out to Iraq, Afghanistan, and other dangerous duty stations, they take precautions. They train hard. They don heavy body armor and helmets. And they take comfort in the belief that, if the worst happens, their family members will be taken care of by the government for which they have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Service members who die in combat know that their families will receive a lump sum payment from the government that will help during the first, most difficult years after their death. They know that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will provide a monthly stipend to their families from the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) program for a service-connected death. And they believe that their families will receive income from the Department of Defense's (DOD) Survivor Benefit Program (SBP), a voluntary insurance program for which these prudent and caring service members pay premiums from their retired pay in order to protect their loved ones. DOD's SBP insurance provides a monthly payment based on what an eligible service member would have earned in retirement.

Sadly, however, these service members are wrong.

Current federal law requires a reduction in the

SBP insurance-based annuity equal to the benefits received from the Department of Veterans Affairs' DIC program. For most active duty enlisted deaths, this means the service members' insurance annuity is eliminated entirely, leaving survivors to subsist only on the veterans' benefit. That DIC benefit is typically just \$13,848 per year – substantially below the poverty level, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

For active duty deaths since October 2001, Congress has authorized surviving spouses to assign the DOD insurance payment to their children so that the family would receive both payments while the children are dependents. However, that option means that neither the spouse nor the children will get any payments from DOD after the children reach age 18.

It is time to end this inequity and actually provide our service members and their families with all of the benefits that are promised to them. With that in mind, I have cosponsored S. 535, a bill to amend federal law to eliminate the so-called "SBP/DIC offset."

In his second inaugural address, Abraham Lincoln called upon our war-torn nation to "...care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan...." It was the right thing to do then, and it is the right thing to do now.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

NEW HAPPENINGS IN WEST VIRGINIA

During the recent Congressional recess, I had the opportunity to visit three areas of our state to participate in ceremonies highlighting some new and exciting facilities that will improve health care, create new jobs, and help make the marvels of science more accessible to our young West Virginia students.

At Marshall University in Huntington, we dedicated a new teaching and clinical center at the medical school. With this center, the university will be able to accommodate more medical students, train more residents, and provide expanded health care services. It is my hope that this new \$23 million clinical center will provide the tools needed to make a significant difference in improving the quality of life for all West Virginians. Perhaps the elusive cure for cancer or the common cold, or other medical miracles not even conceived at this time will be discovered right here in West Virginia.

In Martinsburg, I joined in marking a significant milestone for the 167th Airlift Wing -- the designation of the 167th as a fully operational C-5 aircraft unit. This ten-year journey, which included a \$280 million investment that I helped secure through the appropriations process for infrastructure improvements, has resulted in the creation of more than 200 new full-time jobs and

increased economic development. With this transformation, we ensure the long-term stability and presence of the 167th Airlift Wing.

And in Green Bank, I was honored to join in dedicating the Erma Ora Byrd Green Bank Science Center and student dormitory. The two facilities are the newest additions to the Green Bank Observatory. The Observatory is the home of the 100-meter, 485-foot tall telescope -- the largest, fully steerable radio telescope in the world. In order to help ensure that the Green Bank Observatory could help stimulate the interest of young people and their teachers, I secured \$8 million in appropriations funding for the construction of these two facilities. These new facilities are helping to make the remotely located Observatory more accessible for students from West Virginia and other states to visit and more likely to spark their interest in the study of science. It is my hope that this will also prove the start of a broader understanding and appreciation by the public of all that science, radio astronomy, and Green Bank has to offer.

It was exciting to see firsthand the work of our efforts over the years and the enormous impact it is making on our beloved Mountain State. I look forward to many more visits such as these.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

HELPING BABY SEE

In these tough economic times, every family has to make difficult choices. Parents with newborn children find these decisions especially tough as they try to prioritize how to spend limited resources on the new little one in their family. One expense that I believe is critically important is eye and vision care, especially for newborn babies as they begin to learn and grow.

Experts agree that visual development in children is most dramatic between 6 months and 12 months of age and that early detection and treatment of potential eye and vision problems can help reduce the threat of serious vision impairments. That is why I have put my full support behind the InfantSEE program and have even helped to secure federal resources to expand the scope and impact of this worthwhile program in West Virginia and across the country.

Through the InfantSEE initiative, doctors of optometry provide a one-time, comprehensive eye and vision assessment to infant children, offering early detection of potential eye and vision problems at no-cost, regardless of insurance or ability to pay. Bringing your child in for an InfantSEE assessment can help determine whether that child is at risk for eye or vision problems later in life. And if there is an issue, such problems can

be more easily prevented or corrected if identified early on.

While the InfantSEE program runs year-round, May 4th begins two weeks of a heightened awareness InfantSEE outreach program throughout West Virginia. InfantSEE will traverse our state using a mobile eye clinic for the first time, and during these two weeks, there will be statewide tour stops in Beckley, Bridgeport, Charleston, Lewisburg, and Logan as well as Wheeling, Parkersburg and Martinsburg. At these stops, all infants, regardless of parental income or insurance, will have the opportunity to receive a no-cost comprehensive eye exam. Appointments are not necessary.

In addition to the mobile office stops, many optometrists throughout West Virginia are offering no-cost eye check-ups in their doctor's offices during these two weeks. To find the location most convenient to you, visit www.infantsee.org or call 1-888-396-3937. The phone numbers of each location are listed on the website, making it easy to call and make an appointment.

It is my hope that as many West Virginia families with young children will take advantage of this free program. Preventive action now may help preclude costly treatments and doctor visits later as your child gets older.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

REMEMBERING MOM

Sunday, May 10th is Mother's Day. The second Sunday in May is the day of each year on which our country pauses to honor mothers everywhere. That wonderful woman made sure that you were fed, clothed, and protected. A mother's unselfish sacrifice certainly deserves to be acknowledged with a display of love and thanks.

So on this Mother's Day, take mom out to lunch, to dinner, or to a park. Better yet, make dinner for her. Even if you don't cook very well, she will appreciate the effort -- that's the way moms are.

Celebrate with her. Shower your mom with special attention. Give her your love as she gave it to you despite troubles or your bad behavior. Through good times and lean times, mother was always there. You are not that busy. Make a phone call if you are far away. Mom was never too busy or too far away to show her love for you.

The people of our state can take special pride in knowing that the founder of Mother's Day, Anna Jarvis, was a West Virginian! An-

na's mother, Anna Maria Jarvis had formed Mother's Day Work Clubs to promote sanitary conditions for children. Throughout her life, Anna Maria expressed the idea that one day should be set aside on which everyone could honor mothers. She stated: "I hope someone, sometime, establishes a Memorial Mother's Day, for mothers -- living and dead."

When she died, May 9, 1905, her daughter, Anna Jarvis, vowed to seek the fulfillment of her mother's wish. "By the grace of God, you shall have that day," she remarked at her mother's grave. Afterwards, she began an intensive and successful campaign for that cause.

The first Mother's Day celebration was held in Grafton, West Virginia on May 10, 1908. A few years later, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Congressional Resolution that officially established Mother's Day.

So on this Mother's Day pick up a phone and call your mother. Cook some food. Sing her a song. Let the celebration begin and enjoy the love. You can bet your mother will.

May 6, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

MEMORIAL DAY, 2009

Memorial Day is the day on which our grateful Nation honors the men and women who gave their lives in service to our country. All across the United States there will be visits to the grave sites of our fallen heroes. Among rows of tombstones, adorned with small American flags, families will pay their respects to loved ones who served our Nation.

Memorial Day is also a time to remember that, even when our world is beset with conflict, turmoil, and hatred, there is still honor, bravery and love.

I am reminded of one of the most memorable events of World War II -- the story of the "Immortal Chaplains:" Reverend George I. Fox, Reverend Clark V. Poling, Father John P. Washington, and Rabbi Alexander D. Goode. When the U.S. troopship Dorchester, was torpedoed by a Nazi submarine, with only minutes to live, these four men of God calmly handed out what life jackets were available to the panicking soldiers and sailors. When they ran short of these devices, the Chaplains took off their own life preservers and gave them to others. And then, as the Dorchester was sinking, the four locked arms and prayed as they went to watery graves.

These were men of different faiths -- two were Protestant Ministers, one

was a Jewish Rabbi, and the fourth was a Roman Catholic Priest -- but they were as one in their devotion to their God, and in their willingness to sacrifice so that others might live.

Memorials honoring the Chaplains' compassion have been built in several states. The U.S. War Department awarded them the Distinguished Service Cross. The Postal Service issued a stamp to commemorate their sacrifice. And the Congress honored them with a Resolution that designated a "Four Chaplains Day."

Along with all of the great military leaders like Generals Patton, MacArthur, and Eisenhower, and all of the historic political figures of World War II like Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, we revere the memory of these four humble men of God and their remarkable act of mercy.

As our Lord Jesus Christ said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

This Memorial Day, let us give thanks for the servicemen and women who stand in harm's way all around the globe. Like the four Chaplains, these brave Americans are ready to sacrifice their lives for others and for the freedoms we enjoy.

May 13, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF '09

During the months of May and June, thousands of young men and women in West Virginia are graduating from high school and college. To the class of '09, I extend my heartiest congratulations on this momentous day in your lives and I wish for you much success in your future endeavors.

As you contemplate the paths that you may tread in the years ahead, I would like to offer a suggestion. Why not a career in public service?

Often, public opinion ranks politics at about the same level as sin and hay fever, with hay fever leading by a nose. Politicians are the favorite target of editorial writers and late night comedians. But after six decades in public office, I can tell you that the vast majority of public servants I have known have been good, honest, dedicated men and women.

In fact, the pages of American history books are filled with the names of our country's best and brightest who found a career in politics or government. Some, like George Washington and Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, hailed from wealthy American families.

John Quincy Adams left his position as a Harvard professor to serve in the United States Congress and then became President of the United States. Dr. Woodrow Wilson was the author of a number of important books on government,

and president of Princeton University when he entered politics.

The political realm is where desire and determination can spur average citizens to accomplish extraordinary feats. Even a person with little governing experience, like George Washington, became one of the greatest presidents our country has experienced, helping to inspire our early Republic. A country lawyer named Abraham Lincoln, as president, became the Great Emancipator, the savior of the Union, and one of the most brilliant and eloquent American politicians. Franklin Roosevelt, as president, led our country through a Great Depression and a World War with such warmth, humanity, and sense of history that he became a universal symbol of resolve and strength. Obviously public service, more often than not, brings out the best, not the worst, in its participants.

Never has our country needed talented, committed leaders more than we do today. Government is only as good as the people who are willing to give their time and energies. That kind of service always means sacrifice, but few things can be more rewarding than helping your fellow citizens and serving our Constitution and our flag. To paraphrase President John F. Kennedy, perhaps your future lies in asking what you can do for your country? Politics and public service may be the answer.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

AN EDUCATIONAL VISIT

Earlier this year during a meeting with the new Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, I asked him to visit schools in West Virginia. I was pleased that he not only took my advice, but chose to begin the Department of Education's nationwide 'Listening and Learning' tour in our great state. The purpose of this campaign is for the Secretary to gather information as the Congress moves forward in reauthorizing the 'Elementary and Secondary Education Act,' more commonly known as 'No Child Left Behind.' Beginning this venture in West Virginia was a great opportunity for our state to showcase our talents, and our need to ensure a better education for West Virginia's students.

When we met in my office, I discussed some of the problems West Virginia faces in education: teacher quality and pay; community and technical education; and substance abuse in our schools, to mention a few. Secretary Duncan appeared very willing to work with me to help resolve these threats to excellence in education.

I hope that Secretary Duncan saw first-hand the issues we explored during our meeting, including the difficult challenges facing

our teachers, parents, and administrators; and that many of our children who wish to further their education cannot always afford to go to college and need extra help through student financial loans or grants. We both agreed that the temptation of drugs and alcohol our children face every day is a severe problem all across our country.

I like to think that the issues we face in West Virginia are unique, and West Virginians solve them in unparalleled ways. While we are not a wealthy state, we know how to stretch a dollar. We know what it is like to have to tighten up our proverbial boot straps and dive into a problem. When I reflect on my days in a two-room schoolhouse, we did not have computers and high-technology amenities, but the students were disciplined and the teachers were serious about their work. I was afforded the opportunity to obtain a good education, and I believe we owe the same opportunities to our young people today. And after his visit to West Virginia, I stand ready to work with Secretary Duncan to help provide the necessary tools to build a brighter educational future for our children.

May 27, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

CHILD SAFETY BELTS = SUMMER FUN

With many families taking shorter vacation trips this year due to the economy, we can subsequently expect to see an increase in roadway traffic during the summer months. Sadly, we can also expect to see a corresponding increase in the number of traffic deaths on the nation's roads and highways, and some of these will be children, whose promise will never be realized.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children under 14 years old. In 2007, there were a total of 41,059 traffic fatalities in the United States, and of those deaths, 1,670 were children under 14. It is a somber fact that motor vehicle crashes kill five children and injure 548 every single day.

But there is something we can do. Research has shown that, when used, lap/shoulder seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury to front seat occupants over age 5 by 45 percent in passenger cars, and lessen the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent. For light truck occupants, the use of seat belts lowers the risk of fatal injury by 60 percent and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 65 percent in the same

age group.

Child safety seats further reduce the risk of fatal injury by 71 percent for infants under one year old and by 54 percent in toddlers (1 to 4 years old) in passenger cars. In light trucks, the risk for infants and toddlers is reduced by 58 percent and 59 percent, respectively. There is really no excuse to fail to use child safety seats or shoulder/seat belts to help protect our most precious cargo.

While they are vitally important, child safety seats must also be used correctly. Failure to read the child safety seat instructions, or to properly install the safety seat, undermines the protection that they can provide. Putting children in rear-facing safety seats in the front seat of vehicles with passenger air bags may injure the child if the air bags deploy.

Many local police departments and other safety organizations routinely offer to check the installation of child safety seats. I encourage parents and grandparents to have their safety seats checked by these experts wherever such services are offered. These safety professionals would much rather see you for a safety seat check than to see your injured child at the scene of an accident.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

REMEMBERING DAD

Sunday, June 21 is Father's Day. Father's Day does not have quite the aura of Mother's Day, but it is certainly meaningful that our country also sets aside a day to pay tribute to fathers.

Although men might handle their parenting roles in many different ways, a good father, like a good mother, is basically a nurturer. Children need the warm and protective presence of a father figure in their growing years. In my Father's Day remarks in 1988, I pointed out: "A society without a strong sense of fatherhood is courting an increase in personal and social problems among its young people."

An English proverb says that "one father is worth more than 100 schoolmasters." When I think back on how much I learned from my coal-mining dad, I know that, despite the poverty and hardships of my youth, I was truly blessed by his presence in my life. The example of strength and wisdom, tempered by love, which the father provides in the home is extremely important to the development of a child.

The idea of making Father's Day a national day of recognition is credited to Mrs. Sonora Smart Dodd, of the state of Washington, who began to champion the idea of Father's Day in 1909 after listening to a Mother's Day sermon. It was in 1972 that President Nixon established the third Sunday of June as a permanent national observance

of Father's Day. But the people of West Virginia can take pride in knowing that the first observance of Father's Day took place in our own State.

On December 6, 1907, a horrible mine explosion at Monogah killed more than 360 coal miners. The explosion left more than 1,000 children fatherless. Soon after that tragedy Ms. Grace Clayton proposed to her minister, Dr. Robert Webb, the pastor of the Williams Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church South (now known as Central United Methodist Church) of Fairmont, that fathers be given a day to be honored and remembered. "It was partly the explosion that set me to think how important and loved most fathers are," she explained. As a result, on July 5, 1908, the church celebrated the first Father's Day. This was just two months after the first Mother's Day service had been held 20 miles away near Grafton on May 10, 1908. What a tribute to West Virginia family values - - that both Mother's and Father's Days were first celebrated in our state!

In 1985, the state of West Virginia erected a historical marker declaring Fairmont as the site where Father's Day was first observed.

This Father's Day, I encourage you to keep Ms. Clayton's words in mind. Show your dad "how important and loved" he is.

And to all West Virginia dads, let me personally wish you a happy Father's Day!



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

The Beauties of Vacationing at Home

June 20th is West Virginia Day. It was on this day, 146 years ago, that our beloved State was born.

This glorious day is a time to celebrate the natural beauties of our State! West Virginia has been blessed with unparalleled mountain views, cool green forests, sparkling lakes and rivers, and awe-inspiring geological wonders. And all of these glories are easily accessible because they are preserved in our magnificent State Parks.

This year, with our country in the midst of a recession and many families limiting their vacation plans, I would like to suggest that you enjoy your summer vacation in the state parks of wild and wonderful West Virginia!

If you do, you will be treated to some of the greatest natural beauty in the United States. And you will have a great time! Stay in a picturesque lodge or secluded cabin, or pitch a tent in a park campground. Set up camp, and cook dinner over an outdoor stove. Gather the family around the campfire at night and share some tall tales while roasting marshmallows. Spread a sleeping bag and fall asleep under the stars while pondering the Almighty's infinite majesty, and thanking Him for

creating such a magnificent State.

If it is exercise you crave, go hiking or biking in our lush hardwood forests. Or if a less energetic respite is sought, get on board the sternwheeler at Blennerhassett Island, or take a trip back in time on the Cass Scenic Railroad.

West Virginians are so lucky to have so much recreation available right at home. Thanks to our state parks and forests, West Virginia offers some of the greatest hunting and fishing in the eastern United States. You can catch dinner for the family by going bass or trout fishing in a beautiful mountain stream. Our lakes also offer great recreational opportunities for swimming, boating, and white water rafting.

If you are a history buff, our state parks, among other things, have preserved the colonial frontier as well as Civil War battle sites.

There is much to do to have a great time for you and your family, and think of the money you will save on gasoline or airline tickets.

Happy Birthday, West Virginia! May we continue to be blessed with natural beauty and the best people in the world.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

July 4th: Reason for the Season

Independence Day is here. It is our nation's birthday! The Fourth of July is a celebration of the day, 233 years ago, when our forefathers threw off the yoke of tyranny and declared themselves to be free and independent people.

What courage they had. With the signing of the Declaration of Independence, they had committed an act of treason against the British crown, and the British government had a history of crushing colonial rebellions. Benjamin Franklin was quite sincere when he remarked at the signing of the Declaration: "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

Therefore, on Independence Day, we rightly celebrate and honor the incredible courage of these men as well as their tremendous vision.

What a collection of political talent they were. In addition to Franklin, there was Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Sam Adams, and John Hancock. On July 4, 1776, these and 51 other determined, patriotic Americans adopted the final draft of the Declaration of Independence, thus beginning the world's greatest experiment in government. And with the signing, these men established that "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" are not only "unalienable Rights" of all people, but that "Governments are instituted among men" to secure these rights.

As we celebrate this glorious day, however, we should never forget, as we say of Christmas time, the "reason for the season!" In the last line of the Declaration of Independence, the signers acknowledged their "firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence."

One of those signers, John Adams, wrote that the American Independence "ought to be solemnized with pomp, shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, illuminations." But he also pointed out "it ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty."

Therefore, on this Fourth of July, I urge you to enjoy the picnics, parades, ball games and fireworks. But I also urge you take time to remember our forefathers, those brave Americans who paved the way for the rights and liberties we have today. And, I ask you to take time to thank our Creator with "solemn acts of devotion."

Happy Birthday America! May God Almighty continue to smile upon you, and forever bless you. In the words one of America's greatest poets, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:
Sail on, O Union, strong and great!
Humanity with all its fears,
With all the hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!

June 24, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Honoring Women Airforce Service Pilots

The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest and most distinguished award that Congress can bestow on civilians. On May 20, 2009, the Senate acted to allow the awarding of a Congressional Gold Medal to the Women Airforce Service Pilots, most commonly known by their acronym, WASPs. I was proud to cosponsor this legislation, which rightly, if belatedly, acknowledges the unheralded heroism of these brave pioneering women pilots of World War II.

WASPs were the first women in history to pilot America's military aircraft. As Eleanor Roosevelt noted in 1942, "This is not a time when women should be patient. We are in a war and we need to fight it with all our ability and every weapon possible. Women pilots, in this particular case, are a weapon waiting to be used."

The 1,102 women who wore the WASP wings flew over 60 million miles in every type of aircraft and on every type of mission flown by Army Air Force male pilots, except direct combat missions. They delivered aircraft to battle zones around the world during the war. They towed targets for live anti-aircraft artillery practice, simulated strafing missions, and hauled cargo. Some 300 WASP veterans still survive and are living throughout America. What stories they can tell!

Although these brave women took the military oath and were promised military status when they entered training, they were never afforded active duty military status and were never commissioned. Thirty-eight WASP fliers lost their lives serving their country during the war, but because they were not commissioned, their bodies were sent home at their family's expense without the traditional military honors. Then, when victory during World War II seemed certain, the WASPs were quietly disbanded, leaving the former WASP pilots to pay their own way home!

WASP records were classified and sealed for 35 years, so these women never received honors or recognition for their service to their country, never took part in a ticker-tape parade, never received a medal or any of the benefits offered to male veterans –but, in the true spirit of the citizen-warrior, they never complained.

The G.I. Bill Improvement Act of 1977 finally granted the WASP corps the distinction of full military status for their service, and in 1984, each WASP was awarded the WWII Victory Medal and other appropriate campaign medals. Now, Congress will, at last, have the opportunity to honor these brave women for their pioneering wartime service by awarding them the Congressional Gold Medal.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

HELP FOR HOMEOWNERS

Home foreclosures are affecting West Virginians from every walk of life in nearly every county. Some borrowers made poor choices at the time of purchase, like purchasing homes they could not afford, or using equity from their homes to finance other expenses. However, many West Virginians facing foreclosure have experienced job loss, have been struggling to pay medical bills, or have been the victims of unscrupulous lending practices.

What follows is some information that may be of assistance to homeowners who are trying to make ends meet. If you are already at risk of delinquency on your mortgage or are already in foreclosure, you need to take immediate action. Gather financial documents and contact your mortgage lenders. Banks or mortgage lenders may provide the homeowner with specific information about possible options available.

In addition to contacting their lenders, homeowners may also wish to contact the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) at 1-(800)-CALL-FHA (225-5342). Officials of the FHA may be able to help in determining eligibility for assistance with individual mortgages. If homeowners would like to speak with housing counselors approved by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), they may visit the HUD website at <http://www.hud.gov> for a list of counselors in

HUD recommend that those in need of assistance call 1-888-995-HOPE (4673).

West Virginians seeking assistance with their mortgages may also contact the Federal National Mortgage Association, commonly known as Fannie Mae, at 1-800-7FANNIE. To determine if specific mortgages are owned by Fannie Mae, visit their website at www.fanniemae.com/loanlookup. Likewise, to determine if specific mortgages are owned by the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation, commonly known as Freddie Mac, homeowners may call 1-800-FREDDIE, or visit the Freddie Mac website at www.freddiemac.com/mymortgage.

For general information and updates concerning housing assistance programs, you can also visit www.MakingHomeAffordable.gov, and www.FinancialStability.gov.

Information about mortgage assistance is free, and homeowners should beware of any organization that tries to charge fees for assistance with mortgages. Make sure never to sign your property deed over to any organization or individual promising to "save the home." In addition, never make your mortgage payments to anyone other than your mortgage company, unless the company has approved it.

Even when times are tough, I know that West Virginians will continue to work hard to help their friends and family over-



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

HEALTHCARE FOR CHEMICALLY EXPOSED SOLDIERS

War is always a dangerous, messy, dirty business. Although American troops in Iraq today do not face the imminent threat of chemical and biological warfare, as they did in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, there have been several serious incidents in which troops were likely exposed to toxic materials during their Iraq deployments. Military commanders sometimes fail to address such exposures with the immediacy that they merit, which can mean difficulties for soldiers who later need care for injuries caused by these exposures.

In 2003, members of the West Virginia National Guard were deployed to Basra, Iraq, where they may have been exposed to toxic materials, including sodium dichromate. According to the Army, this chemical, used by former Iraqi plant workers to prevent corrosion, was found on the ground and measured in the air. The chromium VI (six) in sodium dichromate is considered a serious health hazard. Members of an Indiana National Guard unit that were deployed nearby also attributed post-deployment illnesses to the same exposures in the same area. In July 2005, a senior Department of Defense official testified about

numerous other incidents involving hazardous materials.

To help remedy this critical situation, I joined with Senators Bayh, Wyden, Rockefeller and others to introduce S. 642, the "Health Care for Servicemembers Exposed to Chemical Hazards Act."

The bill establishes a registry of members and former members of the armed forces who have been exposed to occupational and environmental health hazards in the line of duty, and makes these veterans eligible for medical examinations and laboratory tests. It requires that the Department of Defense conduct a scientific review of the evidence linking medical conditions to hazardous substances, and makes veterans eligible for treatment at Veterans Administration hospitals for these conditions. The legislation also requires military commanders to promptly report hazardous material exposures to their non-deployed headquarters.

The hazards of war are many and often unavoidable. But we owe it to our troops, who risk so much for our nation, to provide the best possible health and medical care, whether they are injured by a bullet or by a cloud of toxic chemicals.

July 15, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Music is Brain Food

Scholars have long praised the worth of music for the enrichment of human existence. The Greek philosopher Plato observed “Music and rhythm find their way into the secret places of the soul.” The English playwright, George Lillo wrote that, “There’s no sure passion in the human soul, but finds its food in music.”

All of us have experienced how music can influence our mood. Now, there is growing scientific evidence that music can be a “mega vitamin” for the developing brains of children and for adult brains as well—even for individuals whose brains have been damaged by injury or disease.

Music training is often greeted by students with about the same enthusiasm as getting a tooth pulled. However, a recent Harvard University study found that children who study a musical instrument for at least three years outperform children who lack such training, even on tests measuring verbal ability and visual pattern completion—skills not normally associated with musical training. Music students also scored better on tests involving auditory discrimination and finger dexterity.

The longer and more intensely a child studied his or her instrument, the better he or she scored on all tests. These findings highlight the importance of music instruction for our youth.

Whether it be singing or playing an instrument, music has also been found to help brains damaged by disease or injury to find re-routed neural pathways, influencing and improving motor function, communication and even cognition. In one Finnish study, something as simple as listening to music for several hours a day was found to enhance the recovery of stroke victims. Musical and rhythmic cues have also helped the movement and balance of people with degenerative disorders, as well as aphasia, a disorder resulting from damage to the portions of the brain responsible for language.

As much as I love music for its own sake, I am even more gratified to find out that music has benefits beyond the joy in its making and the beauty in hearing it played. It is clear that music is more than food for the soul—it is food for the brain as well. We would all do well to make it an integral part of our daily lives.

July 22, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

“MOVE”-ING TO INCREASE VOTER PARTICIPATION FOR MEMBERS OF ARMED SERVICES

Freedom is never free. For more than 230 years the brave men and women of our armed services have been defending the ideals and freedoms of our democracy that we take for granted.

One of the greatest responsibilities in our democratic society is the right to vote and actively participate in and influence government policies. In many instances, however, the men and women who are overseas in service to our country have not been afforded their full opportunities to vote in our elections.

The Election Assistance Commission has estimated that there are almost 43,000 West Virginia citizens abroad, many of whom are service members and their families, eligible to vote by absentee ballot. But in the 2006 general election, only 309 (less than one percent) of those West Virginians requested absentee ballots, and only 162 of those ballots were actually counted. The abysmal voting statistics from our citizens abroad exist due to lack of information about absentee balloting, the time it takes to receive and return absentee ballots, the difficulties involved in getting ballots to localities where mail services are limited, and the movement of troops between elections.

I have long been an advocate of encouraging our military and overseas citizens to fully participate

in the democratic process. With a voting participation percentage in this country which is far below that of other major democracies, it is imperative that we make it easy for those who are entitled to participate in our electoral process from abroad to do so.

Recently, the Senate adopted legislation that I cosponsored — the “Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act.” This legislation will provide further opportunities for members of our armed services and others to vote in elections through absentee balloting.

The legislation requires States to maintain an electronic system for sending election materials, to send ballots at least 45 days before an election, and to accept ballots post-marked on or before the election if received within 10 days of the election or before the State certifies the election.

Voting is much more than a civic duty. It is a sacred privilege. Our citizens, including those in the armed services, need to voice their opinions, and to fully participate in renewing the promise of America. West Virginians have always been at the head of the line when it comes to volunteering to be of service to our great country. They deserve nothing less than an extra effort to make sure that they can vote and that their vote counts.

July 29, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

REACHING OUT TO VETERANS

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan combined with the U.S. military's increased reliance on National Guard and Reserve forces to serve in those missions, has created a growing population of combat veterans who hail from rural towns and communities across the United States.

West Virginia's current and former service members may not live on or near military bases, but they come back from tours of duty overseas with the same mental and physical injuries seen in active duty forces who receive immediate access to medical care. For many former service members, the fight does not end when they return home. They continue to struggle to readjust to civilian life or to cope with battlefield injuries and stress.

Studies have shown that veterans are more than twice as likely to commit suicide as non-veterans. The highest suicide rate among veterans is in the 20-24 year old age group of veterans who may have served multiple deployments in Iraq or Afghanistan. This group is 2-4 times more likely to commit suicide as civilians of the same age.

These shocking statistics underscore how important it is for our service members to have counseling services available to them. Unfortunately, many rural veterans must travel long distances to seek help at Veterans Administration (VA) medical facilities,

even when the services they need do not require expensive hospital-based medical technology.

To bring some VA services closer to the veteran population they serve, a fleet of 50 new mobile Veterans Centers has hit the road in the last year in an effort to bring counseling and therapy to veterans in rural areas.

Two of the new mobile centers are now roaming the roads of West Virginia. Based in Morgantown and Beckley, the 38-foot motor coaches have spaces for confidential non-medical readjustment counseling and psychological counseling for traumatic military-related experiences as well as family counseling when needed for a veteran's readjustment.

The new mobile vet centers are used to provide outreach and counseling at active-duty, reserve and National Guard activities, including post-deployment health reassessments for returning service members. They will also make appearances at events typically staffed by local VA Center staff, as the Beckley-based mobile vet center did at a "Welcome Home Celebration" for veterans held in Beckley on June 13th.

Hopefully, bringing urgently needed counseling and support services closer to rural veterans and their families will help our veterans and their families mend the lingering wounds of war.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A SUPREME CHOICE

August 8, 2009, marked yet another historic first in our nation's history. On that day, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Roberts administered the oath of office to Judge Sonia Sotomayor, who became the first Hispanic Justice to serve on the United States Supreme Court, and only the third woman in our Nation's history to serve on the highest court in the land. Judge Sotomayor, with my support, was confirmed by the United States Senate on August 6, replacing retiring Justice David Souter for the Court's upcoming term.

I take the Senate's role of providing advice and consent on nominations very seriously. In more than 50 years in the Senate, I have never missed a vote on a confirmation for a Supreme Court Justice. I submitted questions to Judge Sotomayor on matters of great importance to the preservation of Congressional power: the Constitutional grant of the purse strings to the Congress; the role and responsibility of the Legislative Branch to conduct oversight and investigation; and the deliberate restraints on the Executive Branch created by the Constitution's separation of powers.

I am not a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, but I watched the hearings intently; and I studied Judge Sotomayor's words. What struck me about the Judiciary Committee's hearings was

the dearth of questioning by Senators about Judge Sotomayor's judicial record. Indeed, her record is certainly substantial; the most substantial record I have seen in some time. I was disappointed however, that instead of delving into her many opinions, or questioning her on Supreme Court jurisprudence, Judge Sotomayor was asked the same few questions over and over again, in my opinion, needlessly.

The Senate's ability to question a nominee is a precious gift from our Founding Fathers—a check on both the Judiciary and on the Executive Branches. While the President may nominate, under the Constitution, the advice and consent of the Senate is required for confirmation. But, in this particular instance, some of Judge Sotomayor's statements, taken out of context, were exhaustively examined, while volumes of her judicial record went unquestioned, and likely unread. Unfortunately, by not probing, the Senate shirked its responsibilities.

As I said in my remarks in support of Judge Sotomayor's nomination, I hope that the Senate will reflect on the nomination and confirmation processes as envisioned in the Constitution, and ask ourselves whether we can do a better job in living up to the spirit of the law in the future.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

LABOR DAY 2009

The first Monday in September is set aside each year to recognize the dignity of work and to thank American workers for their contributions to making our country better and stronger. It is a day when men and women from all vocations join in celebration and recreation.

Labor Day is an honorable American tradition. In 1893, legislation was introduced in Congress to establish Labor Day as a federal holiday. The next year, President Grover Cleveland signed the legislation into law, and 116 years later, we continue to honor those who earn their bread and butter by the sweat of their brow.

As the son of a coal miner and as a person who married a coal miner's daughter, I have always taken great pride in my coal miner background. And I have always considered the working people of West Virginia as my best friends.

When I think of all the great things that the labor movement has accomplished for the people of our state, from raising the standard of living for our workers to ensuring that they have better, safer, and cleaner places in which to work, my heart swells with pride in being able to represent the working men and women of West Virginia

in the United States Senate, and help them to achieve their goals.

The West Virginia AFL-CIO recently sponsored a "Turn America Around" rally at the West Virginia State Capitol in Charleston. It was well-attended and everyone had a great time.

But I especially liked the theme of it is time to "turn America around." We now have a young, dynamic president who understands working people, and who is striving to put Americans back to work. Although one may not agree with President Obama on every issue, he is a President who cares about workers and families. He is a President who listens.

Health care reform which insures quality, affordable care as the unalienable right of every American; fair trade policies which help stop the exporting of American jobs overseas; and labor law reform which means that every American worker has the opportunity to join a union—these and other causes are in the best traditions of the great American labor movement. I look forward to standing side-by-side with the working men and women of West Virginia to try to make the dreams reality.

August 19, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

FREEDOM OF SPEECH REQUIRES TOLERANCE OF OTHERS VIEWS

In September 1787 in Philadelphia, some of the brightest and bravest men came together to forge the document that to this day guides our great nation: the Constitution of the United States.

The Constitution's preamble established our government's purpose in one short paragraph, followed by a few pages which gave this nation direction and structure. And for almost 222 years, the Constitution has remained a living, breathing document – the foundation of our freedoms and the bedrock of our rights and liberties – that we all cherish.

One of the most sacred of the freedoms contained in our Constitution is the guarantee of freedom of speech. As I have said repeatedly over the years, no citizen should be a mere spectator in our government. We should express our opinions, petition our elected representatives, and engage in an open and civilized debate on the important issues that confront our country.

However, as I have watched the health care debate unfold in many areas and venues across this country during the past month, I have become increasingly concerned with the tone and tenor of a “civilized discourse” that I believe the Framers of the Constitution had in mind when they established the

right to free speech. In many town hall meetings logical and open discussion has been supplanted by disruptive shouting matches where no one is heard and no debate ensues. Members of Congress have been rudely interrupted during their responses and various attendees have engaged in physical confrontation with one another requiring law enforcement officials to remove them from the town meetings.

As a strong defender of our Constitution, I am in no way suggesting that free and open discussion on any topic should be limited. I am heartened by the amount of discussion that is taking place all across this country on the issue of health care and the desire by tens of millions of Americans to become fully informed on the many proposals under consideration in Congress.

But as we go into what will be a critical debate on the future of our nation's health care system, I encourage all of us to take a deep breath, exhale, and be tolerant of others views. Shrillness and violence will not move the debate forward – it will only attempt to undermine the type of freedom of speech that our Founding Fathers envisioned back in 1787 when they rose to that dramatic challenge of establishing what has become the greatest Republic in the world.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

MY FRIEND TED

August 26, 2009 was a day I had hoped and prayed would never come. It was the day when the good Lord took my dear friend, Senator Ted Kennedy, away from us after a courageous and valiant fight against brain cancer. My heart weeps at the loss of my best friend in the Senate, and for Ted's wife, Vicki, his family, and the Senate that he served so ably.

President John F. Kennedy was fond of quoting the biblical passage that tells us: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." (Luke 12:48, KJV) When I think of that passage, I think of the life, career, and accomplishments of my dear friend and colleague, Senator Edward Kennedy.

When Ted Kennedy came to the Senate in 1962, much had already been given to him. He had been born into a wealthy and remarkably talented family. His father had been an Ambassador to England. One of his brothers had been President of the United States. Another brother was the Attorney General of the United States.

Throughout his career, Senator Kennedy believed in a simple premise: that our society's greatness lies in its ability and willingness to provide for its less fortunate members. Whether striving to increase the minimum wage, ensuring that all children have medical insurance, or securing better access to higher education, Senator Kennedy always cared deeply for those whose needs exceeded their political clout. Unbowed by the terrible sorrows that had fallen upon his family, his spirit continued to soar, and he continued to work to make his dreams a reality. Neither years of age nor years of political combat, nor his illness, diminished the idealism and energy of this talented and intelligent man.

The institution that he served so ably will be diminished without his voice of eloquence and reason. I know that the people of the great State of West Virginia join me in expressing our heartfelt condolences to the Kennedy family and to the people of Massachusetts who have lost an extraordinary public servant. Ted, my dear friend, I will miss you dearly.

September 2, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

CELEBRATE OUR CONSTITUTION

Next week, our beloved U.S. Constitution turns 222 years old! On September 17, 1787, the Delegates to the Constitutional Convention met for the last time to sign the document they had created. It was signed by thirty-nine brave men who changed the course of history, and created a most unique form of government. Later ratified by the requisite nine states in 1788, this precious document was the blueprint for our system of government today.

While some may take for granted the existence of our national charter, it was the result of the toil and imagination of our Founding Fathers, including George Washington, who served as President of the Constitutional Convention, James Madison, known as the "Father of the Constitution," Alexander Hamilton, and Benjamin Franklin. The debate on the particular form the government should take was long and intense, but the Framers put aside their personal differences to create a national charter for the common good. Prepared in secret, locked behind doors guarded by sentries, the Framers struck the unique balance between a national government and the states, known as federalism, and established the three branches of government and its separation of powers.

In December 2004, I helped to enact the federal law that designates September 17th of each year as "Constitution and Citizenship Day." I did so because I care deeply about this precious document, and have made it my life's work to study it and let it guide my work in the U.S. Senate. Of the written national constitutions, the U.S. Constitution is the oldest and shortest, and has been in force longer than any other written constitution in the world today. Brilliant in its brevity, it remains extraordinary in its wisdom. It protects our individual liberties. It encapsulates the courage and creativity of our forefathers.

On September 17, I encourage all Americans to spend time reading the text of the Constitution. It is my hope that parents will discuss it with their children, and citizens everywhere will take note of the day's significance. There will be celebrations all across our great land dedicated to our founding document, and reflecting on its importance. I am so excited about the many events that are taking place this year all across our great country, and encourage everyone to use this opportunity to engage in civic discussion and pride. We make ourselves better citizens and patriots by studying and reflecting on the history of our Republic.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

SLEEPING THROUGH SCHOOL

A new school year has begun and both students and parents are beginning a routine that entails getting up earlier and completing and overseeing homework assignments to ensure a successful school year. To really get ready for the academic year, however, parents may want to stress that their children get enough sleep. Staying up late and then sleeping in until noon is not a good option during the school year, because sleep deprivation has serious consequences for students of all ages.

A recent Columbia University Medical Center study of 15,659 teens found that middle- and high-school-aged teens whose parents did not require them to be in bed before midnight on school nights are 42 percent more likely to be depressed than teens whose parents enforce a 10 p.m. or earlier bedtime. The study also found that teens who are allowed to stay up late are 30 percent more likely to have had suicidal thoughts in the past year.

Other studies have shown that shortened sleep hours adversely affect student performance on learning and testing. Cutting back on sleep by an hour a night is equivalent to the loss of two years of cognitive maturation and development. Even staying up late only on Friday and

Saturday night can impair a child's I.Q. by as much as seven points.

New research is also exploring the link between sleep loss and obesity. Three studies of students in Japan, Canada and Australia show that children who get fewer than eight hours of sleep each night have about a 300 percent higher rate of obesity than those who get a full ten hours of sleep. A University of Houston study showed that the odds of adolescent obesity went up 80 percent for each hour of lost sleep.

Teens need approximately nine hours of sleep each night, but most get only about seven and a half hours of sleep; according to the National Institutes of Health. If a teen is an athlete as well as a student, they may need even more than nine hours of sleep.

A Stanford University study showed that when a small sample of student tennis players were asked to sleep for ten hours a night, their sprinting drills were faster, their strokes were more accurate and deep, and their outlook improved. Some experts suggest that natural hormones released into the brain during sleep aid in the physical recovery process. The bottom line is that more sleep equals better mental and physical fitness.

So, this school year, make time for sleep.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

ADOPT A WILD MUSTANG OR BURRO DAY

September 26th marks the first National Adopt a Wild Horse or Burro Day, a combined effort by the Bureau of Land Management and non-profit groups including Wild Horses 4 Ever, the American Horse Protection Association, the Mustang Heritage Foundation and the Humane Society of the United States to find homes for 1,000 wild horses and burros.

The Bureau of Land Management, or BLM, is charged with maintaining America's wild, free-roaming horses and burros in harmony with the public lands they range. To keep herd sizes from growing too large for the land to support, BLM regularly conducts gathers to remove excess horses; the animals pulled off of the range are then offered for adoption to the general public.

On National Adoption Day, wild horses and burros will be available for public adoption at nineteen locations around the United States. Other adoption events are scheduled for other dates in September and October.

Achieving 1,000 adoptions is a very laudable goal, but still leaves more than 20,000 other wild mustangs in long-term holding facilities at taxpayer expense. BLM needs better options to manage America's wild horses in order to avoid using its authority to destroy wild horses over the age of ten or which have been

passed over for adoption three times.

That is why I have been proud to introduce S. 1579, a Senate bill that matches H.R. 1018, the Restore Our American Mustang Act, introduced by my West Virginia House colleague, Nick Rahall. S. 1579 and H.R. 1018 would provide BLM with additional authority necessary to maintain wild horses and burros living on federal lands in a thriving ecological balance while prohibiting the sale for slaughter of wild horses and burros. These bills would enhance adoption efforts and encourage modern contraceptive methods to limit reproduction, among other equine management methods.

Importantly, S. 1579 and H.R. 1018 would also give BLM the authority to begin restoring wild horse and burro ranges to the 53 million acres they roamed as recently as 1971. That vast rangeland has dwindled over time to just 35 million acres -- isolating herds and creating the need for more 'gathers' and more horses filling long-term holding facilities.

Americans value the nation's great Western heritage embodied in a wild horse running free.

While I hope that those up to the challenge will adopt a wild horse or burro, we also need to do more to ensure that this part of our unique American heritage will endure forever free.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

MY CORRIDOR H CRUSADE

The ancient Romans understood that good roads are key to increasing commerce and facilitating trade. They built an empire that stretched across the globe based on that belief.

Of course, good highways remain essential to economic development today, and roads have always been an especially difficult challenge for West Virginia. What irony that the magnificent "summits bathed in glory" that virtually define us can also sometimes hinder economic prosperity.

In 1965, the Appalachian Development Act was authorized by Congress. That legislation was the federal government's promise to help us overcome barriers and promote the region's economic development. The ADA proposed a system of Corridor highways that would traverse some of the most rugged terrain in the eastern United States, opening commerce to the entire Appalachian region, stimulating growth, and alleviating poverty.

Corridor H remains the only unfinished Appalachian corridor highway in West Virginia's portion of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS). Corridor H in West Virginia is planned to stretch from I-79 at Weston through the Potomac Highlands to the Virginia state line. Completing it has become my transportation crusade.

Nearly 66 miles of the corridor in West Virginia

have been completed and are open to traffic. An additional 23 miles are under construction and a 19-mile segment is under final design and awaiting funding. On September 17th, a ceremony marked the completion of a 7-mile segment of Corridor H which included a new bridge over the South Branch of the Potomac. This ceremony also included the groundbreaking for a new ten-mile segment of Corridor H, which will connect the western edge of the Moorefield Bridge to Patterson Creek Road and Forman, West Virginia.

Recently I secured \$4.5 million in the FY 2010 Transportation and HUD Appropriations bill which will be used primarily for work on the roadway between Bismarck and Forman. And to date I have secured over \$350 million in past appropriations bills for Corridor H construction. The State of West Virginia also receives annual ADHS funding to help in our construction efforts.

The good people of central and eastern West Virginia need Corridor H to be able to get to their jobs, their schools, their hospitals, and to get the products they manufacture to market. I am as ardent as ever in my intent to see that the promise made by the Federal Government to the people of Appalachia is kept. The people have been waiting for this system for 45 years, which is far too long. Corridor H -- Finish it!!



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A BOOST TO OUR ECONOMY

Earlier this year, our Nation appeared to be on the precipice of a second Great Depression. The economy was losing, on average, nearly 700,000 jobs per month, and many feared what may lie ahead.

In response, the Congress acted boldly and swiftly by passing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). And President Obama signed this legislation into law in mid-February. By providing assistance to working families, and incentives to businesses and state governments to hire and retain workers, the Recovery Act has played a leading role in stabilizing the U.S. economy.

In West Virginia, I am proud to report that, so far, nearly \$1.5 billion has been committed to our state, in the form of tax relief for working families, investments in state-based infrastructure like roads and water systems, and assistance for those directly hurt by the recession.

The Recovery Act has created or saved over 5,000 jobs in the state. It has provided one-time payments totaling \$118 million to nearly 474,000 West Virginia veterans, seniors, and railroad retirees. It is providing emergency unemployment benefits to 26,000 West Virginians who have lost their jobs and exhausted their regular unemployment benefits.

Stimulus dollars are being used for highway and bridge projects, like the Mon-Fayette Expressway to Morgantown, and

West Virginia Route 9 in Jefferson County. They are being used for mass transit in urban areas like Charleston and Wheeling, and to make improvements and upgrades at airports like Yeager and Greenbrier Valley.

West Virginia will be able to invest in law enforcement and first responders, like in Hinton, where stimulus funds are being used to build a new fire station.

In many counties, like McDowell, Calhoun, and Roane, stimulus funds will be used to extend and upgrade water and sewer lines. In Wheeling, stimulus funds will enable water improvements for commercial development at The Highlands shopping complex. In Wyoming and Mineral Counties, funds will be used for watershed and flood prevention.

The recovery legislation will enable upgrades for National Guard facilities in Bluefield, Charleston and Bridgeport, and Veterans facilities in Huntington and Martinsburg.

These are real benefits for West Virginians – for our families, for our communities, and for our state. Despite the hyperbole and rhetoric one may hear on the radio, see on the television or read on the Internet, over 5,000 West Virginians have jobs today that otherwise would not, thanks to the Recovery Act.

The stimulus package is working. The provisions which invest in our Nation's infrastructure and in the American worker are the right way to help our economy.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT MONTH

During my years in the United States Senate, I have been privileged to work with some very talented and inspiring individuals -- Senator Daniel Inouye, Senator John McCain and former Senators Bob Dole, Max Cleland and Bob Kerrey, all war veterans, have each been severely wounded. These men suffered grievous injuries, and some lost limbs in battle. After their recoveries, no one would have blamed them for taking it easy and spending the rest of their lives at home - but our nation is a better place because they each continued their lives of public service.

October may be designated as "National Disability Employment Month," but smart employers know that any time can be the right time to hire a worker with a disability. To attract and retain talented and dedicated employees, being inclusive of people with disabilities - in recruitment, retention, and advancement - can offer companies a competitive edge. People with disabilities are experienced problem solvers with a proven ability to adapt, like those Senators I have mentioned.

People with disabilities have many talents that should not be overlooked by employers. It is therefore distressing to learn that only 22 percent of people with disabilities are employed, and that the unemployment

rate for disabled workers is 16.2 percent, compared to 9.2 percent for workers who are not disabled, according to Department of Labor statistics.

The National Campaign for Disability Employment aims to improve the job prospects for disabled workers. Supported by West Virginia University with technical assistance from the Job Accommodation Network, the National Campaign for Disability Employment seeks to educate businesses and the public about the incentives available for employing disabled workers and the returns that a company could see from investing in disabled workers.

Advances in technology have made it easier for the disabled to perform at their best. For example, texting was originally developed as a means for deaf individuals to communicate over phone lines. Job accommodations for people with disabilities are usually low cost or no cost. Some 56 percent of workplace accommodations cost absolutely nothing. Of those accommodations that do have a cost, the typical one-time expenditure by employers was \$600, according to the Job Accommodation Network.

I encourage all employers to look beyond a prospective employee's disability to discover the talents and ambition that can help drive their company forward.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

THE HEALTH CARE DEBATE

Congress is currently working on a plan to make good health care affordable for more Americans, while keeping the size of our deficits down. Five Congressional Committees have reported health care legislation and the negotiating between the White House and the Congressional Leadership has just begun. Because health care spending accounts for one-sixth of the U.S. economy the ramifications of reform are enormous. Health care reform is certainly a job in need of doing, but the question is, can we get it right?

What has been singularly unhelpful so far is the fevered pitch of the debate and the demonization of proponents and opponents by one side or the other. Constructive reform will never be accomplished unless the noise level is reduced. Let us hope for at least that much as Congress proceeds. The challenges are many and complex. Can we accomplish reform without creating a huge new bureaucracy? What do we do to restrain the actual costs of health care services? How do we encourage the insurance industry to provide better, more affordable

coverage? Should reform be accomplished through the tax code? What about real world problems, like the shortage of doctors in West Virginia, the distance from hospitals and clinics in rural America, or the fear of law suits which fuels expensive over testing by physicians? How do we encourage healthy life styles among our people, which could avoid major health problems in the first place?

This Senator has always believed that access to decent, affordable health care is the birthright of every citizen, and should not be just a privilege for the better off in our society. The challenges vary from state to state, but in West Virginia — with its difficult topography, large elderly population, low wages, air and water quality issues, occupational diseases, and higher rates of smoking, obesity, and drug and alcohol abuse — the task of crafting meaningful health care reform becomes especially difficult. An effective health care plan for the nation must be flexible enough to adequately accommodate states which have special needs. Anything else will not be fair and effective and should certainly not be enacted.

October 20, 2009



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Recognizing the Last Remaining Veteran of the "Great War"

Veterans Day is the day we set aside to honor the men and women who have defended our country, our way of life, and our freedom. It is the day that allows us to thank our veterans for their patriotism and their willingness to serve our Nation. It is the day of the year that a grateful nation shows its gratitude to its bravest and finest citizens.

The origins of this day are both historic and symbolic. It began at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, that is, 11/11/11 of 1918, when the Allied Powers signed a cease-fire agreement with the Central Powers, thus bringing to an end the bloody international nightmare known as World War I, the "Great War" as it was called. The next year, the United States set aside November 11th as Armistice Day to remember the sacrifices that men and women made during World War I. In 1954, Congress made November 11 a day to honor veterans of all wars, and, therefore, changed the name of the day to "Veterans Day."

Of the 4.7 million Americans who served in World War I, only one is still living — my good friend and our fellow West Virginian, Mr. Frank Woodruff Buckles of Charles Town, who has

become a national treasure and a West Virginia legend.

Mr. Buckles was only 16 years of age when the United States entered the war. As a dough boy, Private Buckles drove dignitaries around England, and an ambulance around France. Mr. Buckles downplays his wartime experience explaining, "There was nothing dramatic about it. Sometimes I was driving in Winchester, England, sometimes France." But his experience was indeed important. It was his willingness as well as that of 4.7 million brave Americans to enter the military and to serve our country that won that war.

While Mr. Buckles was actually born in Missouri in 1901, he became a West Virginian by choice in 1954, when he and his wife settled on a farm in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia, the same area where his ancestors had settled in 1732.

On November 11, 2009, Veterans Day, we need to remember Mr. Buckles, and all of our nation's veterans, as well as the men and women currently wearing our nation's uniforms. We must keep all of them in our hearts and prayers, and make sure that our country serves them well and honorably, just the way that they have served our country.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

FLU PRECAUTIONS

As the first shipments of H1N1 flu vaccine make their way into the state of West Virginia, it is clear that the flu has spread much farther and faster than have the vaccines. Many people are concerned about getting vaccinated in time. The first doses must treat high priority patients first – health care providers, pregnant women, young children and their caregivers, and those with existing medical conditions which put them at higher risk.

In the rush to line up for a flu shot, however, we should not overlook the tried and true basics of flu prevention. The flu spreads primarily through person-to-person contact, so your mother's advice still applies: cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough; wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub; avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth; avoid crowds and limit your exposure to flu victims as much as possible. Disinfect surfaces and clean toys and other objects which your children share. Don't share food or dishes. These simple precautions can help to reduce your and your family's chances of catching the seasonal flu as well as the H1N1 flu and other illnesses.

If you or someone in your family becomes

ill, try to isolate them or yourself as much as possible. Get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids. Stay home from work or school for at least 24 hours after the fever has broken. Children may remain infectious for a longer period of time. Following this simple plan will mean that you will recover faster, and that you will also reduce the chances of co-workers and their families becoming ill. Be careful about handling the dishes and laundry of those who have flu symptoms, and wash clothes and other items they use in warm, soapy water. Consider wearing a mask if you are sick and must interact with your family, or with an ill family member. If you or a sick family member has any special medical conditions or if the illness becomes severe, contact your doctor.

Plenty of helpful advice and information about the flu and vaccine status is available on the Internet at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/ or at www.wvflu.org, or you can call 1-800-CDC-INFO for more information about the H1N1 flu. You can even sign up to receive email updates or link to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for "Twitter" updates on the flu. The flu is here, but common sense precautions plus vaccinations can reduce the risk of catching it.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

CELEBRATING ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

November 21 is the 10th anniversary of National Adoption Day. As an adopted child myself, I am happy to join in celebrating those families who open their hearts and their homes to children in need. Unfortunately, there are still many children in need.

In 2006, an estimated 510,000 children were in foster care in the United States. Many of these children are eventually reunited with their parents, but more than 100,000 need permanent foster homes. Of the estimated 289,000 children who left foster care in 2006, 17 percent, or 49,130, were actually adopted. That is 49,130 happy new beginnings for children who may someday return the favor by achieving great things and raising great families themselves. After all, John Hancock, author James Michener, Apple Computer founder Steven Jobs, Oracle Corporation founder Larry Ellison, Baseball Hall of Famer Jim Palmer, and singer Faith Hill were all adopted.

The children in foster care awaiting adoption are as varied as the families they will join. Their median age is 10.2 years old. Some 40 percent are Caucasian; 32 percent are African-American, and 19 percent are Latino. Just over half are boys. Some have special needs and some have siblings. How many will grow up to be great artists or athletes or

businessmen or U.S. Senators is anyone's guess, but we can be sure that without adoptive families to give these children a second chance, those numbers will be smaller.

National Adoption Day began in 2000 with events in nine cities. It has grown to include more than 300 events in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. More than 25,000 children's adoptions have been finalized on National Adoption Day since its inception, thanks to the collaboration among local adoption agencies, the courts and advocacy organizations like the Children's Home Society of West Virginia, the Alliance of Children's Rights, Casey Family Services, Children's Action Network, the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, and the Freddie Mac Foundation. These groups and their efforts have raised public awareness of the many children in foster care who need a family to call their own.

Adoption, like all child-rearing, is not for the faint of heart. It is, instead, for the great of heart. I hope that more parents who may be considering adopting a child from foster care will take that leap of faith, and I applaud those who already have. Somewhere out there, a foster child is waiting.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

THANKING GOD FOR OUR BLESSINGS

Thanksgiving is one of America's most beloved holidays. It is a day devoted to turkey, family gatherings, football games, parades, and the beginning of the Christmas-holiday season. But it also should be a day devoted to giving thanks to God for our many blessings. It always has been.

Most of us learned about the Pilgrims conducting the first Thanksgiving in 1621 in Plymouth Colony. To the Pilgrims, Thanksgiving was intended as a religious celebration to give thanks to God for helping them survive that first brutal year in the new world.

But before Thanksgiving became an annual tradition in 1863, and an official federal holiday in 1941, it was celebrated on a number of other occasions – and always as a day of giving thanks to God.

During the American Revolution, following the American victory at the Battle of Saratoga in October 1777 that marked a turning point in the war, the Continental Congress approved a resolution proclaiming a day of "Thanksgiving and praise." In his personal notes on the war, General George Washington wrote: "Tomorrow being the day set apart by the honorable Congress for Public Thanksgiving and praise, ... duty call[s] us devoutly to express our grateful acknowledgments to God for the manifold blessings he has granted us."

Following the establishment of the new government of the United States in 1789, President George Washington issued a "Thanksgiving Proclamation" designating a "day of public thanks-giving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness." At President Washington's request, Americans assembled in churches to thank God for his blessings.

During the American Civil War, following the Battle of Gettysburg, President Abraham Lincoln asked the people of the United States to set aside the last Thursday of November "as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father." "In the midst of a Civil War of unequal magnitude and severity," President Lincoln proclaimed, the country should take a day to acknowledge the "gracious gifts of the most high God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy."

On this Thanksgiving, I would like to thank God for the young American men and women who will spend this holiday in harm's way protecting our country and the values we hold dear. And I thank God for the privilege of representing our beloved State and our great people in the U.S. Senate.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

HOLIDAY GREETINGS FOR AMERICA'S HEROES

Spending the holidays away from family and friends is difficult for anyone, but it is even more stressful for individuals serving tours of duty in combat zones or hospitalized while recovering from battlefield injuries. Holidays are also difficult for the families lighting the candles, baking the cookies, or decorating the tree without the companionship of their uniformed family member. Kind words and warm wishes to let our military heroes, families, and veterans know that they are in our thoughts and prayers are always appreciated, but they mean even more during the Christmas season.

With that thought in mind, I hope that many West Virginians will join in the Red Cross's "Holiday Mail for Heroes" campaign. Begun in 2007, when the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., asked the Red Cross to distribute thousands of holiday cards to members of the military, the program grew to include more than 1.4 million holiday greetings sent from Americans to service members, veterans and their families around the world.

In 2009, the Red Cross, with logistical help from corporate partner Pitney Bowes, hopes to reach even more service members and veterans who may be spending the holidays away from home. The United States has 1.4 million active duty members, reservists

and guards on duty, and more than 24 million veterans.

If you and your family would like to warm the heart of a service member, their family, or a veteran this Christmas, send your card before December 7th to:

Holiday Mail for Heroes
P.O. Box 5456
Capitol Heights, MD 20791-5456

Be sure to affix adequate postage. The Red Cross has requested that you not include excessive glitter, inserts, money or "care packages," as these will cause your card to be discarded during processing. Address cards to "Dear Service Member, Family or Veteran," and sign them, but do not send letters or personal information such as home or email addresses.

Red Cross and Pitney Bowes volunteers will screen the cards for hazardous materials, sort, package, and deliver them to military bases and hospitals, veteran's hospitals and other locations in the United States and abroad during the holidays.

The thousands of hours offered by these volunteers and the support provided by Pitney Bowes demonstrate the generosity and caring that are in the true spirit of Christmas. Please consider joining them in sharing a bit of your Christmas spirit with our military service members, their families, and our Nation's veterans. It will mean so much.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

DIABETES AWARENESS

Last month was American Diabetes Month. Many of us know someone with diabetes, or suffer from it ourselves. More than 24 million Americans have been diagnosed with diabetes, and more than 57 million Americans are pre-diabetic. Every 20 seconds, someone is diagnosed with diabetes. If current trends continue, one out of every three children faces a future with diabetes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For the individuals involved and their families, diabetes is a daily struggle that can involve the loss of eyesight, amputations, or dangerous drops in blood sugar that can lead to coma and even death. Every day, nearly 200 people with diabetes undergo an amputation. Another 55 people each day become blind because of diabetes. Another 120 people daily enter end-stage kidney disease programs.

For employers and for society as a whole, the increasing number of diabetics means higher health care costs and lost productivity. Diabetes is one of the leading causes of death and disability in the United States. It leads to heart complications, stroke, and kidney disease. The United States spends \$174 billion a year treating diabetes and its complications.

As devastating as diabetes can be, it is also an avoidable disease. During the month of November, the American Diabetes Association launched a movement called "Stop Diabetes," with the goal of inspiring millions of people to take action against diabetes.

I encourage you to visit the American Diabetes Association website, at www.diabetes.org, to learn more about steps you and your family can take to prevent diabetes or reduce the impact of a diabetes diagnosis. You can find out what researchers are doing to help prevent and treat diabetes, as well as how to make living with diabetes easier.

One can avoid becoming a diabetes statistic, by following that tried and true formula for healthy living – eat right, exercise, and get enough rest. The American Diabetes Association website has recipes and fitness advice that can make nutrition and exercise become a part of our daily lives.

The steps we take today to prevent or stop diabetes may be the best gift that we can give to ourselves, our families and our friends this holiday season. Good health makes every day a joy – just ask someone who lives with a chronic disease like diabetes.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

LIGHTING UP THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

The Christmas season is here. It is that glorious time of the year when, everywhere we look, we will see celebrations of the birth of Jesus. There will be Christmas decorations, holly wreaths, Christmas carolers and Christmas trees. And there will be holiday lights – lots of them.

Holiday lights have become so popular that cities and organizations around the country now offer annual holiday festivals of lights. I am pleased to point out that one of the largest and oldest of these light festivals is here in West Virginia, at Oglebay Park in Wheeling.

Upon his death in 1926, Earl W. Oglebay willed his beautiful country estate to the people of Wheeling “for public operation.” Two years later, Oglebay Park was established. Over the years, the Park has been developed into a multi-purpose, all-season resort that features a swimming pool, championship golf courses, skiing and many other recreational activities. I am proud to have contributed to the growth of this magnificent park by obtaining federal monies for the expansion of Wilson Lodge and the National Training Center for Public Facility Managers.

In 1985, the Park added what has become one of its most popular features, the Winter Festival of Lights. This holiday light show has attracted

millions of visitors and is rated as one of the top 100 international events by the American Bus Association and one of the top 200 events in the country by Discover America.

The Oglebay Winter Festival of Lights covers more than 300 acres and features over a million lights. The Parade of the Wooden Soldiers spans 45 feet across and contains more than 3,000 lights. A giant Poinsettia Wreath with Candles stands 60 feet high and 50 feet in diameter. The delightful Dinosaur Dell presents an animated display of these extinct reptiles.

There is so much to see at what has become one of our State's top tourist attractions. A display featuring the “Twelve Days of Christmas” covers the length of a football field. You will find Charlie Brown, Lucy, and the rest of the Peanuts gang, as well as a rotund “Willard the Snowman,” a beautiful Nativity Scene, and a picturesque Candy Cane Wreath. When you drive through “Snowflake Tunnel” with its 36-foot arches containing 85 giant, twinkling snowflakes made of 6,000 bulbs, you feel that you are driving through a snowstorm.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Winter Festival of Lights. I congratulate Oglebay Park on this milestone anniversary and encourage all to visit this wonderful holiday extravaganza.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

RETAINING "OLD VALUES" IN A NEW YEAR AND A NEW EPOCH

We will soon be crossing the threshold into a New Year, a New Decade, and what promises to be an exciting New Epoch for America.

Having the advantage of my many years on this earth and in political office, I am far from naive. I realize that we will continue to face many challenges, especially those that President Kennedy labeled, "the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war."

But I am optimistic about the future because I have witnessed the wonders of science and the technological breakthroughs that have helped improve the quality of life over many generations. And I know that those accomplishments of the past are just the edge of the realm of possibilities that lie before us.

America will continue to develop the programs and state-of-the-art techniques needed to address our problems and concerns. This will require new visions as well as renewed energies, but, like Americans of the past, we will not deny these responsibilities, we will welcome them.

As we enter this New Epoch, I also urge my fellow West Virginians not

to forget the past! More than ever, we will need to hold onto those values that made this country great - what I call the "old values."

Religious faith, patriotism, family, respect for authority, hard work, and honesty were the building blocks of our communities, our state, and our nation. They must continue to be the building blocks of our future. The Bible says: "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set." (Proverbs 22:28)

These "old values" include our Divine duty to be good stewards of God's creation. The Scripture tells us: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof..." (Psalm 24:1) And, one of my favorite passages reads: "[S]tand still, and consider the wondrous works of God." (Job 37:14)

When I look at our beautiful state, I see the "wondrous works of God."

And when I meet with the people of our state who still hold dear the "old values" — who are honest, hard-working, patriotic, loyal, humble, and generous — I know the future will be good.

Happy New Year, everyone!



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

THE CENSUS: A CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENT

Once again, it is time to stand up and be counted, because 2010 is a census year. Article 1, Section 2, of the Constitution of the United States mandates that, "The actual enumeration shall be made within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent term of 10 years, in such manner as they shall by Law direct."

Many people may wonder why a census, or count, of the population is so important that it rates a direct order in the Constitution. The answer is that census data play an important role in determining how government resources are allocated. The number of seats that each state holds in the U.S. House of Representatives is based on state population. More than \$400 billion in taxpayer funds are allotted to states or within states each year based on formulas that use population or other census data. These funds are used for things like hospitals or job training centers, schools or senior centers, bridges and other public works projects, and emergency services.

For privacy and security reasons, the 2010 census forms cannot be completed on line, but will be mailed or delivered to primary residences in March. It will contain just ten questions, including

name, sex, age, birth date, race, household relationship, and whether you own or rent your residence. Neither the form nor actual live census takers will ask for your Social Security number or the legal status of respondents. It will take only a few minutes to complete and mail back in the postage-paid envelope provided. If you do not respond to the census, as required by April 1, expect to be visited by a census taker to obtain information in person.

The Census Bureau will protect personal information, and private information is never published. It is against the law to disclose or publish individual names; addresses, including GPS coordinates; Social Security numbers; or telephone numbers. All information collected is used to produce only aggregated statistical information.

In preparation for the census, the U.S. Census Bureau is now recruiting temporary, part-time census takers. These jobs offer good pay, flexible hours, and paid training. Hundreds of thousands of census workers will be needed across the United States to help locate households and conduct brief personal interviews with residents. Interested applicants can contact their local Census Office, or call 1-866-861-2010.

So stand up and be counted — It is the American thing to do.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

HONORING DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

In his pursuit of equality for African Americans and the social and economic rights of all people, the Reverend, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was the supreme instigator of change. Because of his refusal to obey unjust laws, and his ability to stir things up, he was, as I said at the time, a "rabble rouser." No person could enter a town, stage an event, or create more upheaval than he could. Nothing he touched was ever the same again. And because of that America is a better country.

But Dr. King's incredible efforts came at an enormous personal price. Crosses were burned on his yard. His home was bombed. His phone lines were tapped by the U.S. government. He was kicked, punched, and stabbed. He was mocked and ridiculed, and thrown into jail.

What was truly inspirational was the way that this man of God answered his critics and their abuse. "Don't ever let anyone pull you so low as to hate them," he told his followers: "We must have compassion and understanding for those who hate us."

In his powerful "I Have A Dream" speech, he asked: "Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline."

Dr. King pursued his "Dream" by avoiding extreme or radical actions, especially violence. "The ultimate weakness of violence," he explained, "is that it is a descending spiral.... Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it." "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that," he said.

Such an approach to the hostile opposition he was encountering might seem naive, or even foolish, but Dr. King was neither. While an idealist, he was an idealist without illusion. He knew the path he had chosen would be rough and tumultuous. But, as he said: "Even though we face difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a Dream."

Martin Luther King's efforts resulted in the most important and sweeping social transformations in American history, and he did it without firing a shot!

For his efforts, Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. A national holiday was established in his honor and soon a monument will be constructed on the National Mall in his honor.

We should all heed the wisdom of Dr. King to "conduct our struggle[s] on the high plane of dignity and discipline." Given the heated political climate of today, adhering to these words would be a true testament to the life of this great American.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A BOON FOR CLARKSBURG

Late last month, the City of Clarksburg got notice of an early \$328 million Christmas present as I had the pleasure to announce that a new Biometrics Technology Center is slated for construction on the campus of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division in Clarksburg.

This joint FBI and Department of Defense (DOD) facility will serve as a center of excellence for research, development, and application of biometrics in support of national security and law enforcement. The 360,000 square-foot, four-story building, will nearly double the space capacity of the existing 2,500-employee FBI CJIS Division campus. When completed in 2013, it will also enable the FBI to consolidate all of its biometrics operations, many of which are in satellite facilities in Fairmont, and will accommodate nearly 2,000 employees. The Center will greatly enhance our efforts in fighting the global war on terrorism.

It will allow the FBI CJIS Division and the Department of the Army to make advances into other identification technologies, such as DNA, iris, palm prints, and facial recognition. These enhancements will provide further opportunities to positively identify individuals and prevent terrorists, criminals, and other ineligible individuals from entering the United States, thus improving our

border security and making our homeland safer.

Dr. Myra Gray, Executive Manager, Department of Defense Biometrics Task Force, has pointed out that, "The Center will provide even greater collaboration for the research and use of biometric technologies across the federal government. The successes we have realized utilizing biometrics to aid war fighters in identifying known and suspected terrorists have significantly advanced our defense capabilities."

This new facility will be a major shot in the arm as we continue to seek ways to diversify West Virginia's economy. The economic spillover effect for the Clarksburg area could be enormous. There will be a significant influx of workers for the construction phases of the project. Once completed, the facility will provide the FBI with the opportunity to expand the employment base as new advances in biometrics research emerge.

One of my goals in bringing federal operations to West Virginia has been to provide our young people with the opportunity to land quality jobs in our state. I have worked with West Virginia University and Marshall University to establish forensic science and biometrics curriculums that have relevance to the work performed at the FBI CJIS. It is my expectation that our West Virginia graduates will be well poised for these future career opportunities.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

DISASTER IN HAITI

On January 12, 2010, a near the surface 7.0 magnitude major earthquake shook the island nation of Haiti, causing still-untold casualties and massive destruction. The pictures we have seen on a daily basis have been gut-wrenching. Many buildings have collapsed or are unstable, including hospitals, police stations, and government buildings. Millions of people are without shelter, food, power or medical care.

The U.S. government, the United Nations, many other nations, and many non-governmental relief organizations are rushing to provide humanitarian relief to the people of Haiti as quickly as possible. Our military's U.S. Southern Command is coordinating the U.S. government response and is sending the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson, four amphibious landing ships with Marines from the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, the USNS Comfort hospital ship, and additional ships, helicopter units, construction, security, civil affairs and logistical support. The Coast Guard and Air Force are also supporting the humanitarian relief efforts in Haiti.

Americans who are missing U.S. citizen family members in Haiti can call the Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or provide information via email to Haiti-Earthquake@State.Gov. Please include the following information in your emails: full name, date of birth and passport information (if known) of the persons in Haiti you are trying to contact; contact information in Haiti; your name and contact

information; your relationship to the person in Haiti; and any special or emergency circumstances. Embassy personnel will attempt to locate U.S. citizens and report back on their status.

Disasters call forth a compassionate response from Americans, and many people are seeking ways to help. The destruction in Haiti has severely limited access to that nation, creating bottlenecks in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Therefore, most relief organizations are requesting cash donations rather than food and material items. For those looking to make contributions to the relief efforts in Haiti, the White House has information and links at www.whitehouse.gov/haitiearthquake_embed. The web site www.interaction.org/crisis-list/earthquake-haiti provides information about non-governmental relief efforts. Visit these sites to learn more about the ways individuals can help.

Anyone with disaster response experience or other specialized technical training who wishes to volunteer his or her services should contact the Center for International Disaster Information (CIDI) at www.cidi.org/incident/haiti-10a to register.

Finally, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has issued a warning about scam artists who solicit funds in the name of bogus Haiti relief efforts. You can read the warning at www.fbi.gov/cyberinvest/escams.htm.

The American people have always responded to those in need. I encourage all to join in this humanitarian and life saving endeavor.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

MAINTAINING THAT NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

Every January, many Americans resolve to diet and exercise. Though few sustain these good intentions, our determination does seem to be making a difference. A recent report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* delivered some rare good news – the obesity rate in the United States, which had been rising for twenty-five years, held steady from 2000 to 2008.

This plateau is encouraging, but U.S. obesity rates are still higher than any other nation. Some 67.2 percent of American adults qualify as obese. Children between the ages of 2 and 19, a group that had recorded the steepest increase in obesity, held steady at a rate of 16.9 percent. Sadly, West Virginia has the third highest percentage of obese adults in the U.S. in 2009 at 31.1 percent, and the eighth highest percentage of overweight children at 35.5 percent. So, we must take this new report as incentive to actually lower the obesity rate.

On a personal and societal level, obesity remains a concern. It has overtaken smoking as the greatest overall health threat facing the country. Obesity is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, stroke, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, joint disease, sleep apnea, asthma, certain types of cancer, and type-2 diabetes.

Studies have shown that obese individuals may face social and employment discrimination and lower average wages. Obese individuals and their families must deal with the pain, suffering, and medical costs of obesity related health conditions, and the possibility of dying or losing a loved one to death at a younger age. Employers must deal with increased absenteeism and lower productivity due to employees' ill health.

Health insurers also face increased expenditures due to obesity complications. A 2004 study cited by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated adult obesity expenditures by state, with West Virginia's costs estimated at \$588 million. With approximately half of all obesity related health care paid by Medicaid and Medicare, all taxpayers help to shoulder these costs.

Americans have done well to stem the rising tide of obesity in the United States. I have long supported the Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity program at the CDC to provide funding for state and community programs to help prevent and control obesity and other chronic diseases.

For our health as well as our economic well-being, we need to further reduce the numbers on the scale and on the obesity chart.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

GEORGE WASHINGTON SLEPT IN WEST VIRGINIA

In February, our Nation celebrates the birthdays of two of our greatest presidents, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. West Virginia was born from the Civil War conflict during which Abraham Lincoln was President. However, George Washington made little known, but notable contributions to our state before it was a state.

In 1748, at the age of 16, George Washington ventured into the land that would become West Virginia for the first time to survey the Eastern Panhandle and Potomac Highlands.

By the time he was 20 years of age, Washington had purchased several tracts of land in what was to become the State of West Virginia, with Rock Hall Tract, just west of Charles Town, being the first. Within a few years, he had acquired extensive land holdings. As a result of his service in the French and Indian War, Washington was granted thousands of acres along the Ohio and Kanawha Rivers, and titles to land around Belle and Moundsville.

Washington became a promoter of the early development of our State. In 1775, he sent an expedition to colonize his holdings along the Kanawha River. The colonists cleared the land, planted orchards, and built houses. But after a few years, the colony mysteriously disappeared, becoming Washington's and West Virginia's "Lost Colony."

Washington also promoted our State's early infrastructure.

He proposed the building of various canals and roads, including the Staunton (Virginia)-to-Parkersburg turnpike. In 1785, Washington secured funding for a route from the Atlantic Ocean to Cedar Grove which was eventually designated Route 60, and became a part of one of America's first trans-continental highways. The Washington Heritage Trail is a 137-mile highway that was inspired by a trip Washington made through what is now the Eastern Panhandle.

George Washington was a regular visitor. In 1770, he made a trip that began in Wheeling and followed the Ohio and Kanawha Rivers, making camp and hunting along the way. He enjoyed the spas at Berkeley Springs, which still features Washington's bath tub. And he was also fond of visiting his brother Charles, the founder of Charles Town, at his house there, "Happy Retreat."

Washington also made West Virginia an integral part of our national security. As a Colonel of the Virginia Regiment (1755-1758), he ordered the construction of Fort Edwards (Hampshire County), Fort Ashby (Mineral County), and Forts Seybert and Upper Tract (Pendleton County). And, it was President Washington who selected Harpers Ferry as the site for the federal arsenal, thus setting the stage for John Brown's uprising.

Happy Birthday President Washington and thank you for your contributions to our great State.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

February is African American History Month Part I. West Virginia History Made

West Virginians are aware that a number of nationally prominent African Americans like Carter G. Woodson and Booker T. Washington are from our State. And West Virginians are aware that many nationally significant events in African American history, like John Brown's Raid and the founding of the Niagra Movement, took place in West Virginia. This February, I want to recognize African Americans who have made and are making history on the State level.

Christopher Payne was the first African American to serve in the West Virginia Legislature. Born in 1848, Payne was educated by his mother, later attended night school in Charleston and became one of the first black teachers in Summers County. He was ordained as a Baptist minister, and organized the Second Baptist Church in Hinton. Payne also established three newspapers, *West Virginia Enterprise*, *The Pioneer*, and the *Mountain Eagle*. In 1896, this talented and accomplished man was elected to the State Legislature. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt named Mr. Payne as Consul General to the Danish West Indies (present day Virgin Islands). When the United States acquired the islands in 1917, Payne was named prosecuting attorney in St. Thomas.

Minnie Buckingham Harper was a housewife in McDowell County who was destined to make

history. Born in 1886, she married E. Howard Harper of Welch, who was elected to the West Virginia State Legislature. When Delegate Harper died in 1928, Governor Howard Gore appointed his wife to fill his unexpired term. When Mrs. Harper took her seat in the State Legislature, she became the first African American woman to serve in a legislative body in the United States!

Elizabeth Simpson Drewry was the first African American woman elected to the West Virginia State legislature. Born in 1893, Drewry graduated from Bluefield State College, and taught in the public schools of McDowell County. In 1950, she was elected to the State Legislature, where she served for 13 years. Delegate Drewry chaired both the Military Affairs and Health Committees, but established herself as an advocate for education, labor, and health care reform. She is credited with introducing important pieces of legislation, including a bill to compensate victims of pneumococcosis ("black lung") and legislation that led to the constitutional amendment that allowed women to serve on juries. In 1956, *Ebony* magazine honored her as one of the ten outstanding black women in government.

In my next column, I will focus on an outstanding West Virginia African American leader who is making history today.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

February is African American History Month Part II. West Virginian Making History

Last week, in my Byrd's-Eye View, I discussed three African Americans who had made history in our State Legislature. This week, as part of African American History Month, I want to highlight Judge Irene C. Berger, who is currently making history in the judicial branch of our government.

Judge Berger grew up in McDowell County, the youngest of nine children, and the proud daughter of a coal miner. After graduating from West Virginia University, she earned her Juris Doctor degree from the West Virginia University College of Law in 1979. Following law school, she worked for Legal Aid Society where, as a young attorney, she provided legal services to the needy. Next, she worked in the Office of Prosecuting Attorney in Kanawha County for twelve years, obtaining more than 40 felony convictions, dozens of which were high-profile cases.

In 1994, Governor Gaston Caperton appointed her circuit court judge for the 13th Judicial Circuit of West Virginia. During her 15 years on the bench, she developed a reputation as an outstanding and thoughtful jurist who was dedicated to the principles of fair and impartial justice. Her judicial temperament and professional conduct earned her superb ratings from the American Bar Association, and resulted in her

being honored by the NAACP, the West Virginia University Alumni Association, the American Bar Foundation, the Mountain State Bar Association, the West Virginia State Bar Foundation, and the West Virginia Women's Commission.

Therefore, it was an honor for me to join my colleague Senator Jay Rockefeller in recommending her to President Obama for appointment as a federal judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia. As I wrote to President Obama, she is "uncommonly qualified" for a seat on the federal bench. I pointed out how she had broken down barrier after barrier. She was the first in her family to attend an integrated school. She was the first in her family to attend college. And she was the first African-American woman to serve as a circuit judge in West Virginia.

In July, 2009, President Obama nominated Judge Berger for the federal judgeship and on October 11, 2009, the U.S. Senate confirmed Judge Berger by a vote of 96-0.

On December 11, Judge Berger was sworn in as Federal District judge for the Southern District of West Virginia, thus breaking down yet another barrier -- becoming the first African American to serve as a federal judge in West Virginia.

All of West Virginia can be proud of our history-making judge.

February 17, 2010



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

PET ADOPTION

Most Americans are proud to proclaim that they are animal lovers, and many are loving and responsible pet owners. We are all disturbed and saddened when we see animals being starved or abused, or when we learn that animals must be destroyed because there are just not enough loving, responsible homes available.

But the sad fact is that, according to the Humane Society of the United States, more than 4 million pets are put down in U.S. shelters each year. Approximately 3.7 million of these are cats or dogs. A single cat can give birth to 18 kittens each year. One dog can produce 20 puppies each year. While kittens and puppies are cute, every unspayed or unneutered cat or dog that is allowed to roam free, or that is "set free" to fend for itself, contributes to the burgeoning overpopulation of dogs and cats that end up in shelters or dying of disease or starvation on the streets.

The only effective way to reduce the suffering of these loving companion animals is to limit their numbers to the amount of homes available. The best way to do this is to spay or neuter them, a relatively simple surgical procedure that can be performed in most veterinary clinics.

In February of each year, the Humane Society of the United

States sponsors "Spay Day," a day of action to promote the spaying and neutering of pets. Inaugurated by the Doris Day Animal League in 1995, the Humane Society joined in sponsoring "Spay Day" in 2006 to encourage pet owners to spay or neuter their pets as an effective and humane way of decreasing the euthanasia of homeless animals in shelters.

In its first 15 years, "Spay Day" participants spayed or neutered approximately 1.5 million animals, potentially sparing many millions of animals from euthanasia and saving hundreds of millions of dollars in shelter costs. The Humane Society's web site, at www.humanesociety.org, has information about "Spay Day" events.

On "Spay Day," many veterinary and humane society offices offer discounted spay/neuter clinics. Other reduced cost spay/neuter clinics may be available near you year round. Your local animal shelter may have recommendations from local veterinarians or other sources that can help cover the cost of spaying/neutering your pet.

I encourage everyone to be a responsible pet lover: look for your next pet at homeless animal shelters, and spay or neuter your animals to keep the population in the shelters and euthanasia down.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

GOD'S GIFT TO WEST VIRGINIA

This year, 2010, is the fortieth anniversary of the premier of John Denver's musical tribute to West Virginia as "almost heaven."

When I think of Denver's classic song, "Take Me Home, Country Roads," (which was co-written with Bill Danoff and Taffy Nivert) I think about the things that make West Virginia so unique. First, of course, is the kind and generous nature of the people of our beloved state. Next, I picture the beauty and serenity of our mountains. They seem sacred, and, in fact, mountains are a frequent location for events in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. It was on Mt. Sinai that God revealed himself to Moses and gave Him the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19:16 and 20:17). God allowed Moses to view the Promised Land from a mountain. It was on Mt. Carmel where Elijah challenged the false prophets of Baal, and, on Mt. Ararat that Noah's Ark came to rest (Genesis 8:4).

Some of the most important teachings of Jesus, as well as the critical events in His life took place in the mountains. The Transfiguration of Jesus, one of the most important Miracles, took place on a mountain, probably Mount Tabor (Luke 9:28-43). It was on Mount Olives that Jesus instructed His disciples (Matthew

24:3). The third temptation of Christ took place on a mountain, so that Jesus could see the kingdoms of the world. (Matthew 4:8-9). And, of course, Jesus delivered perhaps His most important Sermon, the "Sermon on the Mount," from a hillside, where he also gave us the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 5-7). Jesus gave His life for our salvation and was crucified on a hill, Golgotha (Calvary).

Throughout the Bible, examples of the powerful and mystical significance of mountains can be found. For example, Isaiah 25:6 tells us of the celestial banquet on Mount Zion that is a symbol of eternal happiness, and the coming of the Kingdom of God. And one of my favorite passages from the Bible, Psalm 121:1, reads: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

Contemplating the use of mountains and hillsides as symbols in Holy Scripture, underscores what a special gift our mountains are for the people of West Virginia. Majestic, inspiring, and, at times, intimidating, our mountains remind us of the glory of the view after the challenge of the climb. Perhaps that is why West Virginians retain a stalwart and independent character, always inspired by possibilities and undaunted by difficulties.

March 3, 2010



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

PEARL S. BUCK Great Author, Great Humanitarian, Great West Virginian

March is Women's History Month, a time when we celebrate the contributions of women to American history and society. This year, I want to recognize a woman with whom every child in West Virginia should be familiar.

Pearl S. Buck was born in Hillsboro, West Virginia, on June 26, 1892, to Caroline Stulting and Absalom Sydenstricker. Her parents, who were missionaries, took their young daughter, Pearl Comfort Sydenstricker, to China, where she spent most of her youth.

Pearl returned to the United States to obtain a college degree from Randolph-Macon Women's College in Virginia (1914), and then returned to China. In 1917, she married Dr. John Lossing Buck, an agricultural expert who was working in China.

The couple lived for several years in the rural village of Nansuchou, the home of thousands of impoverished farmers. This was the village that served as the setting for many of her early works, including her most famous, *The Good Earth*, which was translated into more than thirty languages, sold nearly two million copies, and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1932.

In 1938, Pearl Buck became the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. At the time, she was only the third American to win the Nobel Prize

for Literature, following Sinclair Lewis and Eugene O'Neill. Pearl Buck eventually wrote more than 100 books, and hundreds of short stories and magazine articles.

While best known for her writings, she was also a great humanitarian. Pearl Buck was an advocate for racial equality and women's rights, years before the issues became national movements. In 1949, she established the Welcome House which found homes for mixed-race children who had been fathered by American servicemen in Asia. In 1964, she launched the Pearl S. Buck Foundation to provide foster care for Asian-American children.

I am proud to point out that this world-renowned writer and humanitarian never forgot her roots. In the 1960s, she toured West Virginia to raise money to preserve her family home in Hillsboro. She expressed the hope that the house "would belong to everyone who cares to go there" and would serve as a "gateway to new thoughts and dreams and ways of life."

Today, the house, The Pearl S. Buck Birthplace, is a National Literary Landmark, a historic house museum, and cultural center. It is open for tours May 1 through November 1. For more information, the phone number is 304-653-4430. Its web site is <http://www.pearlsbuckbirthplace.com>.

March 10, 2010



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Volunteers Saving Lives

Since 1943, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt first proclaimed it as "Red Cross Month," the month of March has been dedicated to the impressive humanitarian and volunteer spirit embodied in the international Red Cross and Red Crescent organization. In the wake of the massive disasters that have struck Chile, Haiti, China, Southeast Asia, and the United States in recent years, people around the globe have many reasons to thank the Red Cross and all of the volunteers who support its lifesaving work.

Since 1863, Red Cross volunteers have been helping the victims of wars, natural disasters, and everyday crises to recover and rebuild. The 700 locally supported chapters of the American Red Cross, manned by more than half a million volunteers and 30,000 employees, respond to more than 70,000 disasters nationwide each year, ranging from single-family and apartment home fires to major disasters like Hurricane Katrina or massive western wildfires.

The Red Cross is the nation's largest supplier of blood and blood products. Blood collected by the Red Cross meets the needs of accident victims, cancer patients, surgical candidates and children with blood disorders.

The Red Cross also supports active duty, National Guard and Reserve service members and their families before and during deployments and in the event that

a service member is wounded.

As well as responding to catastrophes, the Red Cross provides training and educational programs to help individuals and families prevent and respond to emergencies. More than 15 million Americans each year receive first aid training, instruction on CPR and the use of defibrillators, swimming lessons, and water safety classes from their local Red Cross chapters. This training, and the emergency planning preparations encouraged through the Red Cross's "Be Red Cross Ready" program, has undoubtedly saved countless lives.

The Red Cross provides all of these lifesaving services through the generosity of citizen donors, who provide donations of money, to be sure, but also of time and blood. The most lasting way to honor the many people who make up the Red Cross is to become a "Red Crosser," by donating blood or volunteering through a local Red Cross chapter. You can save lives by calling 1-800-GIVE-LIFE, or visiting www.givelife.org to schedule a blood donation appointment.

To locate the local Red Cross chapter closest to you, visit www.redcross.org/where. West Virginia has eight local Red Cross chapters, in Charleston, Kearneysville, Oak Hill, Lewisburg, Parkersburg, Clarksburg, Morgantown and Williamson. To all of these volunteers – thank you!

March 17, 2010



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

Easter The Hope and the Promise

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the essence of Christianity. To Christians, it is the premier event in the world. The resurrection of Jesus not only established Jesus as the Son of God, it provided the basis for the belief that all Christians will triumph over death. The resurrection of Christ from the dead offers the opportunity of a new birth.

Therefore, Easter is a time of hope – the hope that those whom we loved and have lost will indeed live again. Therefore, Easter is a promise – the promise of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins.

It is just and proper that we recognize and celebrate this most sacred and holy of events once a year at Easter. We should, however, be thinking about the resurrection every day of the year. Therefore, this Easter, I want to urge all of my fellow West Virginians who are Christians to take a few minutes of each day to meditate about this miraculous event and what it means to us, and what it has meant to the world. I offer the following passages from the King James Version of the Bible that deal with the resurrection, which you might recite to yourself throughout the year.

“Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had

prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.” (Luke 24:1-3).

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25-26).

“Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.” (2 Corinthians 4:14).

“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” (Matthew 28:5-6).

On this Easter Sunday, put on your new Easter clothes and bonnets, and enjoy your Easter eggs, jelly beans, and chocolate bunnies. But please remember “the reason for the season.”

Please remember that on that first Easter Sunday, so long ago, a wondrous gift was given to the world. It was a promise of life everlasting, of immortality.

Easter is a time to remember that the tomb was empty.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

National Symphony Orchestra Is Coming To West Virginia

I am so pleased that this year the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts has selected West Virginia as the host of its 2010 American Residency Program.

The NSO began the American Residency Program in 1992; it selects one state each year as the host for this unique project.

The goals of the Residency Program are 1) to share all elements of classical instrumental music throughout a given region, 2) to explore the diversity of musical influence within the state, and 3) to give the state a musical voice in the nation's center for the performing arts through training programs, career development opportunities, and commissions. NSO manager, Cynthia Steele explains: "The American Residency is one of the signature projects of the National Symphony Orchestra and our musicians are incredibly committed and generous with their time and talents."

The NSO will be in West Virginia from April 5 to April 13, and will participate in approximately 150 education and performance activities throughout the state. During its visit, NSO will conduct orchestral concerts in Morgantown, Wheeling, Glenville, Huntington, Princeton, and Charleston. There will also be a NSO Young People's Concert in Charleston.

After the orchestra finishes its residency, up to six West Virginia

students will be awarded full scholarships to attend the 2010 Summer Music Institute at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. And a West Virginia music educator will receive a 2010 NSO Teacher Fellowship, and the Orchestra will commission a chamber work from a West Virginia composer.

Because of the generous support of many organizations, especially the Kennedy Center and the U.S. Department of Education, all proceeds from ticket sales resulting from the events remain in the state to support local arts organizations.

NSO is seeking a West Virginia composer to write a new piece of music. The symphony is partnering with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington and the West Virginia Division of Culture and History to commission the work. A resident West Virginia composer will be commissioned to write a work of about 10 to 15 minutes.

A panel convened by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History and the Appalachian Education Initiative will narrow the applications to three finalists. A National Symphony Orchestra jury making the final selection will be overseen by principal conductor Ivan Fischer.

I welcome the NSO to the Mountain State, and encourage all of our people to try to take advantage of this unique and wonderful opportunity.

March 31, 2010



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

PLAY BALL! Baseball Season Arrives

Baseball season is here. We will be hearing the crack of the bat, the singing of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," and the umpire's shout of "strike three, you're out."

Whenever I think about baseball, I like to think about the contributions that West Virginians have made to the history of our national pastime. The people of our State will always proudly remember the Hall of Fame career of George Brett of Glen Dale. I recall Hall of Famer Bill Mazeroski of Wheeling hitting that dramatic, ninth-inning home run during the seventh game of the 1960 World Series to make the Pittsburgh Pirates world champions. And Lew Burdett of Nitro who was named the MVP of the 1957 World Series for pitching three complete-game victories that made the Milwaukee Braves world champions.

Then there is John Milton "Jack" Warhop!

Who was Jack Warhop you may ask? I wonder how many of the folks in Hinton, where Warhop was born on July 4, 1884, can tell you who he was.

Warhop was working on the C&O railroad, when he began playing for the company's local baseball team. Eventually, his pitching took him to the major leagues, where, on September 19, 1908, he pitched his first game for

the New York Highlanders, later renamed the New York Yankees.

Warhop's date with baseball immortality came on May 6, 1915, while pitching for the Yankees. It was the third inning of a scoreless ball game, Warhop was pitching and the batter was a rookie pitcher for the Boston Red Sox. The 5,000 fans in attendance did not expect much from the batter because of the prevailing notion that pitchers couldn't hit. However, according to the Boston Globe, that rookie pitcher "impressed the onlookers as being a hitter of the first rank," because he "swatted a low ball [from Warhop] into the upper tier of the right-field grandstand" for a home run.

It was the very first home run ever hit by the legendary home run hitter Babe Ruth!

The Great Bambino, the Sultan of Swat, the King of Clout, as Ruth would also be called, went on to hit 713 more home runs.

The people of our State can take pride in knowing that it was a West Virginian who started Babe on his glorious, home-run hitting career. Someone had to do it, and it was a West Virginian who did it!

I have often pointed out that no sports event ever changed the course of history, but this one pitch was truly a great moment in baseball history.

April 7, 2010



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

GOD BLESS OUR MINERS

I am the son of a coal miner who married a coal miner's daughter, and I feel a special, familial relationship with our state's coal miners. I know about the grueling work that they do, the hardships they endure, and how they risk their safety every day to produce the energy that powers our country.

Tragedies such as the explosion at Upper Big Branch Mine-South in Raleigh County on April 5, are an outrage.

I mourn the loss of life. I am saddened when I think of the wives who will now face tomorrow without husbands, and the children who will grow up without fathers. I firmly believe that such a terrible loss of life in the mines can be avoided.

Growing up in the southern West Virginia coal fields, I saw the bodies of too many coal diggers pulled from the coal mines after an explosion. I helped carry the coffins of too many miners who perished in mine accidents. To this day I carry the memory of the faces of their grieving widows and children.

I have worked to improve the health and safety conditions of the men and women who work in our nation's coal mines. I have sponsored and supported legislation to expand and improve federal mine safety laws.

I am especially proud of my role in the formulation and passage of the groundbreaking, landmark Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969 which was enacted following the explosion at Farmington #9 that took the lives of 78 of our fellow West

Virginians. This is the most comprehensive legislation covering the mining industry in history, and to this day, the strongest worker protection law in the world. But clearly more is needed.

Following the Sago mine disaster of 2006, which took the lives of 11 miners, I helped formulate and Congress approved the MINER Act which provided for post-accident emergency response.

This and other pieces of legislation and increased funding resources should mean that tragedies on the scale of Upper Big Branch Mine-South no longer happen.

Once investigations are completed and we learn the cause of this disaster, action must be taken. But, laws only work if they are enforced. There must be stronger enforcement. Companies with dismal safety records and multiple violations must be punished. Companies with exemplary safety records should be rewarded for their efforts.

And attitudes have to change. The coal in our mountains belongs to the people of West Virginia. It is our birthright and our sons and daughters work hard to mine it. West Virginians must never feel beholden to a coal company. If a mining company disregards the safety of our miners, that company should not continue to enjoy the fruits of our citizens' labor or the profits from our "black gold." Make no mistake about it. Many other responsible companies will be lining up for the privilege of working in West Virginia.



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

NATIONAL POETRY MONTH

When I was a young boy, it was common for children to recite poetry in school and at assemblies before audiences of their parents and friends. Some of the poems told stories or taught lessons. Some were humorous, some were silly, and some were both beautiful and moving. Memorizing and reciting the poems inspired in me a love for words, cadence, meter and rhyme that has never left me. I can still recite from memory some of the poems I learned so long ago.

Although public recitation has fallen from favor, poetry has not lost its fascination for lovers of words. In 1996, the Academy of American Poets inaugurated National Poetry Month to celebrate the enduring beauty of verse. Now, each April is filled with events designed to introduce and share poetry with the public and to highlight the extraordinary legacy and ongoing achievement of American poets.

Poets have also utilized technology to reach out to new and established poetry readers. By visiting www.poets.org/m from any mobile device, one can browse more than 2,500 poems, poet biographies, and historical essays from the archives of the Academy of American Poets. Poetry lovers can also sign up to have great poems from new books e-mailed to

them, or visit the National Poetry Map to discover where poetry events are taking place.

One goal of National Poetry Month is to help teachers and librarians make poetry a more important part of the school curriculum. With that in mind, the Academy of American Poets creates and distributes posters announcing National Poetry Month as well as offering lesson plans and tip sheets for teachers and librarians. Their web site, at www.poets.org, offers a list of 30 ways to celebrate National Poetry Month – an idea for each day of the month.

Since 2002, New York City has celebrated each April 29th as National “Poem in Your Pocket” Day. Participants are encouraged to carry a favorite verse in their pocket, and to share it with friends and acquaintances.

I would be hard pressed to pick just one poem to carry on “Poem in Your Pocket” Day -- a few lines that capture the beauty of a spring morning? A poem that honors a loving mother or father? A stirring metaphor that teaches us a lesson for our times? There are so many wonderful poems, and new ones written every day. I hope that, this April, everyone can find beauty, wisdom or humor wrapped in the words of a poem.

April 21, 2010



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

HOMELESS HEROES

During a conflict, soldiers face many risks from gunfire, bombs, chemicals, and other battlefield dangers. However, once safely back at home, some veterans face a new risk—homelessness. The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that approximately 107,000 veterans are homeless on any given night and more than 200,000 veterans are homeless at some time during the year.

These veterans have served in every war and military operation since World War II. More than 67 percent served in uniform for at least three years and 33 percent were stationed in a war zone.

What factors help to make our veterans vulnerable? The shortage of affordable housing, lack of jobs, and access to health care, in addition to homelessness, put our vets at risk. Displaced and at-risk veterans often struggle with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and substance abuse, compounded by the absence of family and social support networks. Homelessness is directly linked to ones' ability to secure employment and health care, making it harder for homeless Americans, including veterans, to escape a cycle of despair. Unfortunately, existing federal homeless programs do not focus on veterans.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is working to reach homeless veterans, currently servicing an estimated 92,000 of those-in-

need, but that still leaves more than 100,000 veterans in need of help.

I recently cosponsored S. 1160, the Homes for Heroes Act of 2009. S. 1160 would direct the Department of Housing and Urban Development to expand homeless veterans' access to existing housing assistance programs. I have also cosponsored S. 1547, the Zero Tolerance for Veterans Homelessness Act of 2009, which would direct the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to establish a program within the Veterans Benefits Administration to combat homelessness among veterans.

Veterans caring for children make up a small but growing percentage of homeless veterans. Therefore, I have also cosponsored S. 1237, the Homeless Women Veterans and Homeless Veterans with Children Act of 2009. S. 1237 would expand the existing grant program for veterans with special needs to include homeless veterans who care for minor children. It would also direct the Secretary of Labor to make grants to programs and facilities that provide services to homeless veterans with children that help reintegrate these veterans into the labor force.

America's veterans have given their best service to our country on the battlefield; we owe them our country's best efforts to help them deal with a return to civilian life.

April 28, 2010



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

MOTHER'S DAY

The origins of Mother's Day are rooted deep in the West Virginia hills. Anna Jarvis was born in Webster, West Virginia, on May 1, 1864. Her family moved to Grafton, West Virginia when she was a child. On May 12, 1907, two years after her mother's death, Anna Jarvis arranged a memorial service to honor her mother's memory. That event sparked her successful campaign to make "Mother's Day" a recognized holiday. That dream came true for Anna Jarvis in 1914.

Today, the International Mother's Day Shrine, located in Grafton, commemorates Anna Jarvis' accomplishment. However, I believe that the best Mother's Day shrine is the one which each of us builds in our hearts of the memories of our own mothers.

While Mother's Day will be joyful for many, it is heartbreaking to think of the mothers who will not receive cards or flowers, or enjoy a Mother's Day brunch with their husbands and children. In Montcoal, West Virginia, there are twenty-nine families who are grieving the loss of sons, husbands, brothers, and friends. The community, the state, and the nation grieve with them, but that is of little comfort for the mothers

who will wake on this Mother's Day to quiet houses and silent phones.

Mother's Day is lonely as well for the mothers, wives, and families of soldiers who have been lost in battle in Iraq and Afghanistan. Miner's mothers like soldier's mothers know well of the constant tension of having a beloved child in harm's way.

These "mother's fears" have not changed since I was a child growing up in the coalfields or during all the wars and conflicts since. Neither have the vigils outside of a mine disaster, nor the tearful memorials and funeral services that follow. The haunting bugle call of "Taps" brings a lump in my throat today just as it did the first time I watched a soldier be buried with military honors. During those services, often the most tragic figure of all was the mother.

Tragedy reminds us just how much mother's care means to children, and how much their children mean to mothers. This Mother's Day we have an opportunity to thank our mothers for that care, either in person or in our prayers, and to think about that great generosity of spirit that marks all mothers.

May 5, 2010



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

THE 1960 WEST VIRGINIA PRIMARY AND THE MAKING OF A PRESIDENT

May 10 was the fiftieth anniversary of the 1960 Democratic presidential primary in West Virginia. This was, perhaps, one of the most important presidential primaries in recent history. It was the election that made Senator John F. Kennedy the presidential nominee of the Democratic Party. "It was in West Virginia," wrote Kennedy's press secretary Pierre Salinger, "that Kennedy really sewed up the Democratic nomination for President." Speaking in Wheeling in 1962, President Kennedy declared, "West Virginia ... is the State which sent me out into the world, and you are the people who made me the Democratic candidate for President of the United States."

And the 1960 Democratic primary was the political contest that paved the way for America's first Catholic president. With West Virginia being an overwhelmingly Protestant state in 1960, religion was seen as the "burning issue" of the contest. Therefore, if Kennedy, who was Catholic, defeated his only opponent, Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, who was a Protestant, it would show that religion would no longer be a defeating handicap in a presidential contest.

For weeks, both national and international media swarmed our state as people, not only around the United States, but also around the world, closely followed the West Virginia primary to see if a Catholic had a chance of becoming president.

According to the media, the prospects did not look good for Kennedy. *Newsweek* noted that the "deck looks to be hopelessly stacked against Jack Kennedy in West Virginia.... This state is 95 percent Protestant." The *Wall Street Journal* predicted that Kennedy "would lose—perhaps heavily. The vote against him could go as high as 60% of the total." The *Baltimore Sun* predicted that Humphrey would take "two out of three [voters], solely because he is a Protestant and Kennedy is a Catholic."

On May 10, 1960, the people of West Virginia stunned the nation! Kennedy won a sweeping victory in the Mountain State. His victory was a 61-39 percent margin and he carried 50 of 55 counties.

It was an historical moment. The *Congressional Quarterly* reported: "The results were viewed by political observers as proof that Kennedy's Roman Catholicism would not bar him from winning the nomination or general election."

Journalist Theodore White, who was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his book, *The Making of the President, 1960*, called the West Virginia Democratic presidential primary "a turning point in American history."

The best assessment came from Kennedy himself, who, the day after winning the primary, proclaimed: the religious issue was "buried here in the soil of West Virginia."



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

MEMORIAL DAY, 2010

In the United States, Memorial Day, the day on which we commemorate our fallen heroes, also marks the beginning of summer, and, therefore, it is happily celebrated with picnics, ball games, and family gatherings. But while we enjoy this special seasonal holiday, we should also bear in mind that this is a most solemn day. On Memorial Day, we remember the Americans who gave their lives in service to our country, and pay homage to their sacrifice. Their graves are a reminder of the high cost of maintaining freedom.

I once read of a small town in the Netherlands (Castricum), where the local schools pledged to care for the graves of the American servicemen who made the ultimate sacrifice to liberate the Netherlands from Nazi tyranny during World War II. Caring for a grave meant keeping the grave in "excellent" condition. The children in the Netherlands undertook this commitment because they understood what had been preserved for them by the Americans. Obviously, these children did not take their freedoms for granted.

I have always been proud to represent a state, in which freedom also is not taken for granted. In every American armed conflict, West Virginians

have been in the forefront of enlistments and casualties. Our State has one of the largest numbers of veterans per capita in the Nation. West Virginia's citizens have contributed greatly to the safety and welfare of our country. They are a shining example of the patriotism which is so characteristic of our State.

As we remember our heroes, it is appropriate that we also take time to reflect upon the courage and service of those Americans now serving in harm's way in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere around the globe. I join with you in praying for their safe return from faraway lands.

Writing about the thousands of soldiers who lost their lives during the battle at Antietam, Civil War historian Bruce Catton explained that those men did not die for a "few feet of a cornfield or a rocky hill." They died so that "this country might be permitted to go on," and that it might be permitted to fulfill the great hope of our Founding Fathers.

The same can be said of all the courageous men and women who fought and died in our Nation's wars. They served and they made the ultimate sacrifice to permit this country to carry on and to fulfill the great hope of our Founding Fathers.

May 19, 2010



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

A CALL TO (HEALTHY) ARMS

Generally speaking, Americans love "Ten Best" or "Ten Worst" lists, and we avidly scan the rankings to discover who or what occupies the top or bottom spot. But I, for one, am tired of seeing West Virginia at the top of the obesity and smoking lists. I know I am not alone in my concern about the health of West Virginians when I read the statistics on heart attacks, diabetes, and cancer.

There are many factors when it comes to the reasons for the generally poor health of West Virginians. Access to affordable health care, busy schedules and long commutes, the demands of work and family, education about proper nutrition and exercise, too much television, too much alcohol, too much tobacco use, poor eating habits, and obesity — all are contributing factors. But, all of these factors can be, in large part, overcome by characteristics that I know West Virginians have in abundance: grit, determination, and discipline.

Each one of us, no matter our age, has the means within us to improve our health and the quality of our lives. We cannot all become fitness gurus or Olympic

athletes, but we can take simple, low cost steps to become healthier and more fit. The steps are many, but none are hard, and the rewards for our families and ourselves are lasting. Improving our own health, and the health of our children, should be our highest priority.

Thanks to investments in health research made by the federal government and privately-funded nonprofit organizations, information about health, nutrition, exercise, smoking and alcohol cessation, dental health, and related topics is widely and publicly available over the internet and in many public libraries. Over the coming weeks, I will summarize some of the information that is available, and provide links to additional resources on nutrition, exercise, smoking and alcohol cessation, and dental health.

We must provide our children and grandchildren with the examples and the tools to live long and healthy lives. Children put no stock in "Do as I say, not as I do," so we must — must — begin to set the example we want them to follow. Mountaineers should not only be free, they should be healthy.

May 26, 2010



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

OUR HEARTS BEAT TRUE FOR THE RED, WHITE, AND BLUE

June 14 is Flag Day, the day that Americans celebrate and show respect for our great national emblem, the American flag. This is not a federal holiday, but, in my opinion, it is one of the most important days of the year. This is a day filled with much history and meaning.

It was on June 14, 1777, that the Continental Congress adopted the Flag Act that established the official flag of the United States. The thirteen colonies assembled in the Continental Congress took this action because they understood the need for a symbol of national unity.

Early in the American Revolution, the colonial armies were fighting under the banners of their individual colonies, or of their local militia units. The banner of New England, for example, was the Liberty Tree, which showed a pine tree on a field of white, with the words, "An Appeal to Heaven." The Minutemen from Culpepper County, Virginia, waved a flag with a coiled rattlesnake which carried the motto, "Liberty or Death."

This diversity of flags seemed to reflect a lack of unity among the colonies. Feeling the need to establish a symbol of national unity, the Congress resolved:

"That the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the

union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

I have always been impressed with the wisdom of the founders of our country, and here again we can see their brilliance and foresight. The simplicity of that pattern, alternating stripes and crisp white stars on a field of blue, allowed our flag to evolve along with the ever-changing map of the United States.

And the flag they chose has become the most visible symbol of our Nation, and our most beloved national icon. It symbolizes our strength, honor, ideals, and national purpose. It recognizes our glorious past, while it celebrates a more glorious future.

The flag symbolizes our values and ideals, as well as our power, our economic and military might. The flag rallies our courage as it inspires deeds of valor and sacrifice. When we think of the American flag, we think of the Marines heroically planting it on top of Iwo Jima during World War II, American astronauts planting it on the moon, and those valiant New York City firefighters hoisting the American flag in the rubble of the World Trade Towers on September 11, 2001.

Above everything else though, our flag is representative of our national unity – "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

DENTAL HEALTH

A bright smile is an obvious asset for anyone, whether in a business or social setting. But, clean teeth mean more than pleasant breath and fewer cavities. A lifelong commitment to good dental health through the simple habits of twice-daily brushing and regular flossing can reap many other health benefits.

Good dental care may also prevent problems like gum disease or oral cancer. According to the American Dental Association, some studies have also linked gum disease with the development of heart disease, arterial blockages and stroke. Smoking and diabetes may increase one's risk of gum disease and resulting tooth loss, especially for those over age 45. Gum disease in pregnant women has been linked to low-birth weight babies. These dire outcomes make daily brushing and flossing, along with regular dental checkups, an easy first step to improving overall health.

Tooth care should begin early. Brush baby's gums and teeth gently with a wet washcloth, moving to water on a child's toothbrush until age two. Do not let an infant go to sleep with a bottle. Juice or milk on the teeth can lead to "baby-bottle tooth decay." Limit sugary snacks for tooth health in children as well as weight management. Initiate regular visits to the dentist starting with a child's first birthday.

As children grow, they should brush twice daily

with fluoride toothpaste, and get in the habit of flossing daily. Aside from other health considerations, teens should not smoke or chew tobacco, which can stain teeth, worsen bad breath or even cause mouth cancer. Wearing protective headgear while playing contact sports will help protect a teen's smile. Adults should continue to brush twice daily with fluoride toothpaste, and floss every day. In addition to not using tobacco products, adults should ask their doctor about any medications they use which may have side effects that could damage teeth. Older people or anyone with problems brushing effectively should consider investing in an electric or battery operated toothbrush. If sores in the mouth will not heal, or gums become irritated, see a doctor or dentist promptly.

These simple steps – brushing, flossing, and seeing a dentist regularly – are the cornerstones of a bright smile and a healthier life, and are easy to do. Limiting sugary and starchy snacks, including sodas and alcohol, and stopping smoking, are additional steps that offer life-style benefits far beyond healthy teeth.

For additional information you can go to: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/dentalhealth.html, or <http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/healthy/prevention>.

And make sure you smile a big healthy smile for me!!!



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

FATHER'S DAY

Sunday, June 20th, is Father's Day. Father's Day sparks memories of my two fathers and of all the lessons they taught me. My birth father had the faith in his wife, my mother, to heed her wish that I be raised by my aunt and uncle in West Virginia if she were to die while I was still an infant. After my mother's death in the influenza pandemic of 1918, my father did as she had asked, and I went to live with Vlurma and Titus Byrd, my aunt and uncle.

My second father, my "Pap," was the hardworking West Virginia coal miner, Titus Byrd, who reared me. His daily quiet example shaped my goals and my future outlook. I cannot thank him enough for his willingness to take on the lifelong task of parenting a child not his own. We never had an extra penny, but "Pap" always made me feel loved.

Jean Paul Richter observed that, "What a father says to his children is not heard by the world, but it will be heard for posterity." A father must

balance on a fine edge – pushing his children to be not just *their* best, but teaching them to strive to be *the* best. A father must teach his children an idealism that inspires them to make the impossible real, but he must also know when to back off and simply be proud of his children's effort. Fathers must set the example for their children to follow in respecting others and dealing with life's setbacks. Mixing elements of the tough taskmaster, hard-charging coach, protector and defender, mentor and teacher, hands-on or hands-off participant in family life – there are as many roles as there are fathers. The results of each father's work are on public display as his children grow and take their places in society.

This Father's Day, I will remember both my father and my "Pap", with great fondness. I hope all of us, whether grown or not, will remember their fathers with pride and love, and thank "Dad" for his caring example and his hard work.

June 16, 2010



Byrd's-Eye View

By U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd

WEST VIRGINIA DAY

June 20, in addition to being Father's Day this year, was also the 147th anniversary of the birth of West Virginia.

It was on June 20, 1863, that West Virginia, by an act of Congress and the signature of President Abraham Lincoln, became the thirty-fifth State of our Union. The official ceremonies to celebrate the event took place in Wheeling. The *Wheeling Intelligencer*, called it a "great gala day" -- and it was! Although our country was in the middle of a bitter, divisive, and bloody Civil War, the newspaper reported that, "thousands of people from abroad" as well as the new state officials and the "entire population" of Wheeling engaged in the festivities of the day.

Flags of all sizes were flown from every housetop and every business in the city. Ceremonies included bands playing patriotic songs, and the West Virginia militia parading through the town.

In the inaugural prayer at the ceremonies, the Reverend J.T. McClure proclaimed:

"We pray Thee, almighty God, that this State, born amidst tears and blood and fire and desolation, may long be preserved and from its little beginning may grow to be a might and a power that shall make those who come after us look upon *it with*

joy and gladness and pride of heart."

The man who is considered the "father of West Virginia," Francis H. Pierpont, declared: "May [West Virginia], from this small beginning today, grow to be the proudest state in all the glorious galaxy of States that form the Nation."

Waitman T. Willey, one of our State's first two U.S. Senators, proclaimed: "What we have longed for and labored for and prayed for is [now] a fixed fact. West Virginia is a fixed fact."

After the speeches, 35 children, representing the 35 States of the Union, sang more patriotic songs and a band played the "Star Spangled Banner."

The day closed with a brilliant display of fireworks over the Ohio River.

The next day, the *New York Post* reported: "born amid the turmoil of the Civil War and cradled by the storm ... the 35th State is now added to the American union."

The *New York Times* echoed the words of Senator Willey with the headline that read: "West Virginia is now a fixed fact."

A belated Happy Birthday, West Virginia! 147 years later, we can, as the Reverend Mr. McClure predicted, continue to look upon our State everyday "with joy and gladness and pride of heart."