



ROBERT C. BYRD
of West Virginia

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Robert C. Byrd, a Democrat from West Virginia, has served on the Appropriations Committee longer than any other Senator in history. He joined the committee in 1959, the year he began his Senate career, and has remained on the committee for all of his years in the Senate. In 1989, he became the 29th chairman of the Appropriations Committee, serving until 1995. On January 3, 2001, he became the 32d chairman of the committee, serving until January 20, 2001,¹ and on June 6, 2001, he became the 34th chairman of the committee. He is the second Senator from West Virginia to serve as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.²

Born in North Wilkesboro, NC, on November 20, 1917, Byrd attended West Virginia public schools and Beckley College, Concord College, Morris Harvey College, and Marshall College, all in West Virginia, and George Washington University Law School. He graduated from American University Law School, cum laude, in 1963. After serving in the West Virginia House of Delegates from 1946 to 1950 and in the West Virginia Senate from 1950 to 1952, Byrd, in 1952, won election to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he remained until his election to the U.S. Senate in 1958. In the Senate, he has held a series of leadership positions, including secretary of the Democratic Conference from 1967 to 1971 and majority whip from 1971 to 1977. In 1977 Byrd became Senate Democratic leader, a post he held for 12 years, as majority leader from 1977 to 1981 and again from 1987 to 1989, and as minority leader from 1981 to 1987. He has served as President pro tempore of the Senate from 1989 to 1995, January 3 to January 20, 2001, and from June 2001 to January 2003.³ Since January 2003, Senator Byrd has served as President pro tempore emeritus of the Senate. He served in more leadership positions in the U.S. Senate than any other Senator of any party in Senate history. And in May 2001, Senator Byrd received what he considers his greatest honor when Governor Bob Wise and the West Virginia Legislature presented him with the “West Virginian of the 20th Century” award.

¹ At the beginning of the 107th Congress, in January 2001, the Senate was evenly divided. With a Democratic President and Vice President still serving until January 20, the Democratic Vice President was available to break a tie,

and the Democrats thus controlled the Senate for 17 days, from January 3 to January 20. On January 3, the Senate adopted S. Res. 7 designating Democratic Senators as committee chairmen to serve during this period and Republican chairmen to serve effective at noon on January 20, 2001.

²The first was Henry Gassaway Davis, who served as chairman from 1879 to 1881.

³Democrats controlled the Senate from January 3 to January 20, 2001, due to the potential tie-breaking vote of Vice President Gore; Senator Byrd served during that period. Republicans regained control of the Senate starting January 20, 2001, due to the potential tie-breaking vote of Vice President Cheney; at that point, Senator Thurmond again became President pro tempore. Both were elected with a single resolution on January 3, 2001.

For further reading: Byrd, Robert C. *The Senate, 1789–1989: Addresses on the History of the United States Senate*. Vol. 2, Washington, DC, 1991. Chapters 25–28.