

Joe Biden

U.S. SENATOR FOR DELAWARE

Thirty-Five Years of Dedication to Delaware

In any field, thirty-five years of service is impressive, however; when you are a United States Senator, thirty-five years of service is an even greater feat. Taking office on January 3, 1973, at age 30, and re-elected five times since, Senator Biden reached this thirty-five year milestone at the close of 2007, awarding him the title of 20th longest serving Senator in United States history.

To commemorate these thirty-five years of remarkable Senate service, and to set the stage for many more, thirty-five notable accomplishments are highlighted here.

Equal Credit Opportunity Act Amendments

After helping to outlaw credit discrimination on the basis of sex or marital status, Senator Biden sponsored legislation to extend the protections to ban discrimination based on age, race, color, religion or national origin, and to strengthen enforcement. The law requires creditors to supply a statement to applicants in the case of any credit denial or termination to ensure that the basis of such a decision was legitimate and justifiable (P.L. 94-239).

Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act

As a member of the Intelligence Committee, Senator Biden helped draft the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) in 1978. This legislation set specific guidelines and procedures for acquiring foreign intelligence domestically and established a distinct court to review and rule on these requests. (P.L. 95-511).

Classified Information Criminal Trial Procedures Act

Senator Biden introduced the Classified Information Criminal Trial Procedures Act in the Senate in 1979. Also known as the "greymail statute," this act clarified trial procedures in criminal cases involving classified information. The Senator's legislation allowed classified information to be submitted as evidence during a trial without its classified status being compromised through either omitting portions of the sensitive material or submitting summary statements in lieu of the original documents (P.L. 96-456).

United States Commission on Civil Rights Act of 1983

Senator Biden was instrumental in restoring and protecting the independence of the nation's civil rights watchdog, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, when its existence was threatened in 1983. He led intricate bipartisan negotiations that resulted in legislation reconstituting and strengthening the Commission charged with investigating voting rights cases and other denials of equal protection based on race, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin (P.L. 98-183).

Criminal Forfeiture Amendment Act

In 1981, Senator Biden introduced legislation that amended the Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) and the Continuing Criminal Enterprise statute. This legislation gave courts the power to seize any and all funds gained from illicit activities, including the importation and exportation of illegal narcotics. Additionally, the Criminal Forfeiture Amendment Act expanded the federal courts' power to confiscate funds outside of federal jurisdiction (P.L. 98-473).

Global Climate Protection Act

In 1986, Senator Biden introduced legislation to bring attention to the issue of global warming. Among the first bills on the issue, it called for the establishment of a task force to research, develop, and implement a national strategy to combat climate change. A modified form of this pioneering legislation passed in 1987 (P.L. 100-204).

The Drug Czar

Recognizing the need for greater control over the abuse and trafficking of illegal drugs, Senator Biden was the first in Congress to propose a cabinet level office to oversee national drug policy. Senator Biden began this effort in 1981 with his introduction of the National Security and Violent Crime Control Act of 1981. The Drug Czar's responsibilities include coordinating all federal agencies responsible for drug-related programs and declaring a strategy to combat illegal drug use and trafficking in America. Senator Biden's plan came to fruition in 1988 with the Anti-Drug Abuse Act (P.L. 100-690).

Debt-for-Nature Swaps

Senator Biden created the Debt-for-Nature exchange program in 1989 (P.L. 101-624). This was part of a broader Latin American debt relief effort that provided conservation groups with the ability to purchase commercial debt from indebted nations in exchange for investment in tropical forests. This program was expanded to cover tropical forests worldwide under the Tropical Forest Conservation Act in 1998 and has generated hundreds of millions of dollars to protect globally significant forests (P.L. 105-214).

Campus Sexual Assault Victims' Bill of Rights Act

Senator Biden introduced the Campus Sexual Assault Victim's Bill of Rights Act in 1991, which required colleges and universities to establish and implement written policies regarding the rights of sexual assault victims. Furthermore, this legislation also compelled these institutions to disclose campus security policies and all campus crime statistics (P.L.102-325).

Breast Cancer Record

For the past 14 years, Senator Biden has brought much-needed attention to the importance of early detection in the fight against breast cancer by sponsoring legislation each year recognizing the third Friday in October as National Mammography Day.

Stopping Genocide in Bosnia and Kosovo

As an early proponent of arming Bosnian Muslims, Senator Biden authored legislation allowing a drawdown from U.S. weapons stocks for that purpose (P.L. 102-391). The Senator also authored an influential report in April 1993 urging the U.S. to lift the arms embargo against Bosnia and strike Serb military targets with air power (S. Prt. 103-33). Continuing with his commitment to bring stability to the region, in 1999 Senator Biden authored a Senate-passed resolution endorsing an air war to stop genocidal actions of Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic in Kosovo (S. Con. Res. 21).

Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994

In response to a crime epidemic across the nation, Senator Biden introduced the most comprehensive crime legislation in the history of our nation. The 1994 Crime Bill changed the focus of the federal response to criminal justice and established a balanced, three-prong approach to fighting crime: robust crime prevention efforts, swift prosecution, and certain incarceration for violent offenders. Specifically, this bill provided new and stiffer sentences for violent and drug trafficking crimes committed by gang members, banned the use of military-style assault weapons, and implemented a registration requirement for sexually violent offenders. Senator Biden's crime control legislation also placed a premium on prevention programs to break the cycle of violence by authorizing billions in federal funding for after school programs to prevent criminal activity and rehabilitation services for juvenile offenders to ensure that they become more productive members of society (P.L. 103-322).

The Community Oriented Policing Services Program (COPS)

To combat rising crime, Senator Biden created the Community Oriented Policing Services program (COPS). The signature component of the COPS program is placing over 100,000 additional local police officers on the streets of America (P.L. 103-322).

Violence Against Women Act

Senator Biden first introduced the landmark Violence Against Women Act in 1990, and thereafter held hundreds of hours of Congressional hearings tackling the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault. After four years, the bipartisan measure became law as part of the Biden Crime Bill, and the first federal law against domestic violence and stalking was established and penalties for sexual assault crimes were increased. The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 set out a comprehensive coordinated community response for battered women, including resources for shelters, police departments, prosecutors' offices and victim advocates. The National Domestic Violence Hotline was created in the 1994 Act and has since become a major resource for victims and their families. The Act was reauthorized in 2000, and again in 2005 (P.L.103-322).

Radio Free Asia

In an effort to promote democracy, in 1994, Senator Biden authored legislation creating "Radio Free Asia," a radio broadcasting system to China and other non-democracies in East Asia modeled on the success of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty (P.L. 103-236).

Cape Henlopen State Park

Delaware's most popular State Park and top tourist designation was once an exclusive enclave for military brass. Lands condemned by the Federal Government to establish National Defense facilities were being held by the Department of Defense for exclusive recreation facilities long after the defense needs ended. Senator Biden sworn in, in 1973 began a 20 year battle to restore Cape Henlopen to its rightful owners, the people of Delaware. William Penn granted the lands to be open to public use and Senator Biden wrote and passed legislation to return each parcel as it was declared excess to defense needs. Cape Henlopen is now over 5,000 acres and almost five miles of beach open and protected for the people.

Chemical Weapons Convention

As Ranking Member of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Biden was the leader in securing Senate approval of the Chemical Weapons Convention in April 1997. The treaty had stalled the year prior, and Senator Biden played a critical role in its passage (S. Res. 75).

UN Reform

In 1999, the Senator worked to enact a law to pay dues owed to the United Nations, conditioned on certain UN reforms. This landmark law put U.S.-UN relations back on a stronger footing after years of tension between Washington and New York (P.L. 106-113).

White Clay Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers System Act

For over 25 years, Senator Biden worked with state and local government, as well as the community, to protect the precious resources of the White Clay Creek Watershed in Delaware. After convincing the National Park Service to study the watershed's unique characteristics, Senator Biden sponsored legislation in 2000 incorporating the White Clay Creek Watershed into the National Wild and Scenic River system. The legislation, passed that same year, incorporated 191 miles of the White Clay Creek and its tributaries into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The designation not only brings national attention to the unique cultural, natural and recreational values of the area, but it also provides an added level of protection from overdevelopment, by requiring an in-depth review by the National Park Service of any proposed project requiring federal permits or federal funding in the affected area. It is the first and only national Wild and Scenic River in the state of Delaware (P.L. 106-266).

Kids 2000 Act

The Kids 2000 Act, which was designed by Senator Biden, created a public-private partnership that helped reduce the digital divide by creating computer centers in Boys and Girls Clubs across the country. Corporate sponsors, such as AOL and Microsoft, have donated over \$500 million in services and equipment to this Biden initiative (P.L. 106-313).

Public Diplomacy / International Broadcasting

After 9/11, Senator Biden put forward a comprehensive plan to expand U.S. government broadcasting as a means of providing objective news and information in the Muslim world. In the 1990s, he was instrumental in the establishment of a single, independent agency to oversee all U.S. government broadcasting; he also ensured that its journalistic operations would not be unduly influenced by foreign policy considerations, which would have undermined their credibility (P.L. 103-236, P.L. 105-277).

Public Safety Officers' Benefits Improvement Act

Senator Biden sponsored this legislation in 2001 that increased death benefits to the families of public safety officers killed in the line of duty to \$250,000 (P.L. 107-56).

White Collar Crime Penalty Enhancement Act of 2002

In 2002, in response to the corporate scandals at Enron and WorldCom, Senator Biden authored this legislation to protect the American people from corporate fraud. Senator Biden's bill held corporate officers criminally liable for any misrepresentations or omissions in financial statements, requiring that the CEO and CFO certify the accuracy of all financial filings. Additionally, the legislation increased the penalties for white collar crimes to up to ten years in prison (P.L. 107-204).

Illicit Drug Anti-Proliferation Act of 2003

The Senator introduced this legislation that created penalties for people that knowingly rent, lease or allow their homes or property to be used for the purpose of manufacturing, storing or distributing illegal drugs (P.L.108-21).

Anabolic Steroid Control Act of 2004

In an effort to protect our kids and reign in cheating professional athletes, Senator Biden sponsored legislation that expanded the definition of unlawful anabolic steroids to include popular steroid precursors such as tetrahydrogestrinone (THG) and androstenedione (andro). The bill also authorized \$15 million in grants to public and non-profit organizations to carry out science-based education programs in elementary and secondary schools to highlight the harmful effects of anabolic steroids (P.L.108-358).

Children's Advocacy Center's Reauthorization

In 2003, Senator Biden successfully reauthorized Children's Advocacy Centers, the nation's leading non-profit organization that provides training, prevention and treatment services to fight child abuse and neglect. Numbered at over 500 throughout the country, local Children's Advocacy Centers coordinate teams of law enforcement, criminal justice, child protective service, medical and mental health workers to help children at risk (P.L.108-21).

NATO Enlargement

As senior Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Biden was a key player in ensuring Senate approval of the expansion of NATO in the late 1990s and earlier in this decade. The countries added include the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Stopping Genocide in Darfur

Senator Biden has been an instrumental leader in the Congressional effort to end the genocide in Darfur. Starting in 2004, he pressed the Bush administration to acknowledge the genocide, to increase sanctions on Khartoum and to deliver humanitarian assistance to refugees. In 2006, the Senator further introduced and secured passage of legislation urging the President to establish a NATO-led No Fly Zone over Darfur to prevent the Sudanese government from supplying the Janjaweed militia and attacking civilians (S. Res. 383). He also authored a provision to create and fund a Presidential Special Envoy for Darfur (P.L. 109-234).

Fort Delaware

In 1997, Senator Biden began his efforts to secure funding to restore and preserve Pea Patch Island. A 270 acre State Park, this island has become a nationally recognized bird sanctuary and houses Fort Delaware, one of the oldest Civil War Fortresses in America. Severe erosion of the seawall of the Island had threatened the integrity of the Fort and its many historic artifacts. Senator Biden was successful in securing \$10 million dollars to rebuild the seawall and the project was completed in 2005.

Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006

Senator Biden was the author of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act. This legislation was written to establish a comprehensive national database of convicted sexual offenders. Under the law, released convicts are required to periodically check in with authorities as well as submit recent photographs to be used in updating the national database. The Adam Walsh Protection Act also established a national sex offender website that is searchable by geographic radius and zip code. This act passed unanimously through the Senate in 2006 (P.L.109-248).

Rail Security Act

Originally drafted in the aftermath of 9/11, the Rail Security Act of 2007 was the first comprehensive effort to upgrade rail security in the United States. After years of effort, this legislation, which authorizes resources to increase Amtrak Security and upgrade the security of tunnels and train stations, and requires the Department of Homeland Security to regulate the transportation of hazardous materials on railways finally passed in 2007 (P.L. 110-53).

Middle East Foundation

Senator Biden authored legislation creating a “Middle East Foundation” to make grants to non-governmental organizations to support the building blocks of democracy in the Middle East such as women’s rights, a free and independent media and a vibrant private sector (P.L. 110-53).

Little Mill Creek Flood Control Project in Elsmere

In 1990, Senator Biden began working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Delaware’s Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control and New Castle County Government to study flooding problems occurring along the Little Mill Creek, located in Elsmere, Delaware. For years, the creek flooded, resulting in significant damage to homes and business. At Senator Biden's urging, the Corps agreed to the study and subsequently designed a project that controls flooding in the area. Senator Biden was able to secure \$2.1 million in federal funding to construct the project which was completed in 2007.

Biden-Gelb Plan for Iraq

In 2007, as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Biden co-authored and introduced the Biden-Gelb Plan for Iraq, which envisages a political settlement in Iraq based on the principles of federalism. This plan proposes splitting the nation of Iraq into three provinces based on ethnic lines to help promote peace and stability in the country. The Biden-Gelb amendment was endorsed by the Senate by in a vote of 75-23 (P.L. 110-181).

Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles

In 2007, Senator Biden fought to protect American military personnel from Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), responsible for 70% of American casualties, by leading the fight to get over \$22 billion for over 15, 000 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles. Through his amendments on the floor, speeches and letters to both colleagues and the Administration, Senator Biden was able to ensure that frontline forces in harm’s way are getting twice as many MRAPs twice as fast as originally planned (P.L. 110-28, P.L. 110-92, P.L. 110-116).