

West Virginia, Nation Mourn the Loss of Senator Robert C. Byrd



In a 2007 photograph, Senator Robert C. Byrd stands before the stately United States Capitol building in Washington, D.C. Byrd died on June 28, 2010 after becoming the country's longest-serving senator in history. He leaves a tremendously respected and admired legacy. Photo from Senator Byrd's official website (byrd.senate.gov).

On June 28, 2010, at approximately 3:00 A.M., West Virginia lost a man who was – in addition to being a husband, statesman, father, orator, grandfather, scholar, great-grandfather, national leader, friend, benefactor, fiddler, and author – a true son of West Virginia.

Senator Robert C. Byrd, West Virginia's senior United States senator, passed away at the age of 92. He was the country's longest-serving senator.

Since his death, local and national news media have covered, documented, and reiterated Senator Byrd's life and accomplishments. In a life of 92 years with a political career spanning 63 of them (with over 18,500 votes cast in his 51 years as a U.S. senator), there is much to tell. Searching any media source archives – tv, radio, print, online, etc. – will uncover piece after piece telling his life's story. One article may focus on his humble beginnings as an adopted child in the West Virginia coalfields, to his progression as a self-made man who earned a law degree during his congressional tenure by attending night classes, to his becoming an historic expert on Congress and its rules and traditions. A television broadcast may document his rising political career, beginning as a State delegate, then State senator, moving to the U.S. House of Representatives, and on to the U.S. Senate. A radio broadcast might recall his views and votes on various topics, and be spliced with sound bits of his wisdoms, while another source will chronicle his voting history and political clout, especially in his position as a highly-respected member and chair of the prestigious Senate Appropriations Committee. Still yet, those who knew him delighted us with stories, both personal and professional.

Whichever article, broadcast, or even word-of-mouth story you examine, no matter how different the scope or focus of each, two common threads will emerge: Robert C. Byrd was a man who believed in, and supported completely, both the United States Constitution and Senate, and he had nothing but love and pride for West Virginia and her citizens, giving his heart and soul to providing all he could for her land and her people.

As we pay our final tributes and bid our last goodbyes to a truly great, accomplished, and respected national leader, perhaps the best parting words are found in the last verse of the State's official song, *The West Virginia Hills*:

*Oh, the West Virginia hills! I must bid you now adieu.
In my home beyond the mountains I shall ever dream of you;
In the evening time of life, if my Father only wills,
I shall still behold the vision of those West Virginia hills.*

The end and the reward of toil is rest (Prof. James Beattie). Rest in peace.

Robert Byrd was a man of principle and integrity who believed in admitting mistakes and atoning for them. Here are two statements of wisdom on that subject: In his book, *Letter to a New President*, he counsels Barack Obama, "Only dictators and kings can get away with never admitting their mistakes." A second quote, relevant to all but aimed at inspiring young people to think about consequences before acting, says, "It's a lesson to young people of today, that once a major mistake has been made in one's life, it will always be there"

A Message to State Employees from State Treasurer John D. Perdue:

State's 457 Program is an Investment in Your Future

It's tough to save in times like these. Heck, it's hard to save even in sound economic times.

Nevertheless, it's easy to underestimate the importance of it. If you happen to be a public employee of any stripe in West Virginia, I'd like to respectfully submit West Virginia Retirement Plus as a savings candidate.

Any 457 plan is similar to a private sector 401(k) plan in structure. The major difference is 457 plans typically don't offer matching funds, but ours did. Those who signed up by July 1, 2007 are on pace to draw \$400 in matching funds in exchange for a total investment of \$1,600. That's a 25 percent match. State employees who enrolled by June 18, 2010 and contribute \$17 a pay period may draw \$200 over the next two fiscal years.

Even without the matching funds, a supplemental 457 plan is a good investment. It doesn't matter whether one is a State, city, or county employee. Contributions accumulate tax-free until withdrawn at retirement.

Since my office took over the plan in July of 2006, we have:

- ◆ **Opened the plan to more than 90 political subdivisions.**
- ◆ **Added 6,000 new participants in four years, for a total of 10,600.**
- ◆ **Increased plan assets by \$26 million, for a total of \$95 million.**
- ◆ **Have upgraded investment options .**

It should be noted that a 457 plan is intended to be supplemental retirement. A person's company or government pension should be the backbone, assuming standard pensions stand the test of time and financial constraints. We will see.

But every little bit you put back helps. The beauty of 457 and other retirement contributions is that you don't see them; one can't spend what one doesn't have in his or her paycheck.

The old axiom in saving is to "pay yourself first." That's what you are doing whenever you put money into any retirement savings vehicle. Social



Security, which for generations served as a major plank in anyone's retirement plan, isn't a certainty for young folks coming up today.

And many states and companies are moving away from standard pension plans and into "defined contribution" scenarios. This means plans exactly such as 457s and 401(k)s may indeed become more and more important.

Saving, of course, is the perfect antidote to falling into more and more debt. If one can exercise the discipline of paying himself first and not spending money he doesn't have, he has already bettered the vast, vast majority of his fellow Americans.

Debt is choking the European economies and is not exactly a small issue to the United States. Think of saving as a soft, comfy bed you know will be there every night. Debt, on the other hand, is both the rock and hard place. It takes huge sums of what you have worked so hard to earn, much like an organized crime thug making his collections.

Allow a vehicle such as West Virginia Retirement Plus to be your soft bed. Call to speak with a member of my staff at 1-877-786-2982 or check out our website at www.wv457.com.

Capitol Food Court Improvements Planned

On July 30, 2010, the State's contract with Guest Services for the operation of The Capitol Food Court will end and the facility will be temporarily closed. The good news is that it will reopen approximately late summer with exactly what State employees are wanting: Good food at a reasonable price.

The former cafeteria closed and then reopened in January 2008 as The Capitol Food Court. The new facility offered a change from the former cafeteria style venue to a 300-

seat food court with various stations and options. The food options and quality were very good, but pricing was one of the biggest complaints.

Department of Administration Cabinet Secretary Robert Ferguson says that the voices of employees and visitors have been heard.

"We have listened to what our employees and visitors have said they want. Although the current design and concept are functional, we have to transform this facility to what works for West Virginia State em-

ployees and guests. They want an inexpensive, good-tasting, quick meal and that is what we plan to offer," said Ferguson.

Details like exact menu and operating hours are still being discussed, but the new facility will continue serving breakfast and lunch.

According to Ferguson, his office is looking at cost-saving measures that won't compromise the quality,

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Have a Cookout, but Grill Safely This Summer!














Contributed by Carol Nolte of the State Fire Marshal's Office.

Between 2003 and 2006, U.S. fire departments responded to an average of 7,900 fires involving grills, hibachis, or barbeques **per year**. Each year, these fires caused an average of 10 civilian deaths, 120 reported injuries, and \$80 million in property damage. Most of these fires involved gas grills (81%); 16% used charcoal or other solid fuel.

The leading factor contributing to gas grill fires was leaks or breaks in the equipment. The main cause of charcoal grill fires was having something flammable too close to the grill. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) states that in 2007, 18,600 patients went to emergency rooms with injuries involving gas grills.

“We know that the number of grill fires goes up between May and July, when people are spending more time outdoors. But with just a little common sense, these injuries and losses are easily prevented,” said West Virginia State Fire Marshal Sterling Lewis, Jr. “Have a basic routine for maintenance and inspection of your grill equipment – it will keep you, your family, and your property safe.”

Here are several tips that can keep you and your family members safe this summer:

-  Keep your grill at least 10 feet away from your house or other structures. A flaming fire can quickly spread out of control – 33% of home grill structure fires start on an exterior balcony or unenclosed porch.
-  Never use a grill underneath a roof, awning, or other structure; avoid overhanging branches as well.
-  Never use propane or charcoal-fueled grills of any kind anywhere but outdoors in order to avoid both a fire hazard and a build-up of carbon monoxide in enclosed spaces.
-  Before using your grill for the first time each season, visually inspect the grill itself, as well as smaller parts, to make sure it's free of animal or bird nests, insects, dried leaves, rusted or worn out parts, etc.
-  Also, check the gas tank hose for any leaks or breaks. Spray light soapy water on the hose and around fixtures. If there's a gas leak, it will bubble.
-  If there's a gas leak and there is no flame, turn off the gas tank and the grill. If the leak stops, get your grill serviced before using it again. If the leak doesn't stop, call the fire department!
-  If you smell gas while cooking, get away from the grill immediately. Call the fire department—but NEVER try to move the grill.
-  Attend your grill at all times—and keep children and pets away from the grill area.
-  Keep your grill free of grease or fat buildup.
-  Keep charcoal fluid away from children and away from heat sources.
-  If you use starter fluid, use ONLY charcoal starter fluid. NEVER add the fluid or any other flammable liquids to the fire.
-  If you use an electric charcoal starter, make sure you're using an extension cord rated for outdoor use.
-  If using a charcoal grill, make sure the coals have cooled COMPLETELY before you dispose of them. Use a metal container only.

The West Virginia State Fire Marshal's Office wishes everyone a safe and happy summer season! For more information on summer safety, visit the following websites:

www.nfpa.org



www.usfa.dhs.gov



www.homesafetvcouncil.org

From the Miners' Health, Safety and Training webpage:

How Much Do You Know About Coal Mining History and Geology in West Virginia?

We all know that West Virginia's mining industry is crucial to our State and federal economy. Did you know that:

- Coal was first discovered in what is now West Virginia in 1742 by John Peter Salley in what is now Boone County.
- Coal occurs in 53 of West Virginia's 55 Counties only Jefferson and Hardy in the eastern panhandle have no coal.
- Forty-three counties have reserves of minable (economic) coal.
- There are 117 named coal seams in West Virginia.
- Sixty-five seams are considered minable.
- Annually, 25 West Virginia counties produce coal.
- McDowell County has produced more coal than any other county in West Virginia.
- In 2008 coal was produced from 57 different coal seams in West Virginia.
- West Virginia has 4% of all coal reserves.





For more West Virginia coal facts and figures:
www.wvminesafety.org/wvcoalfacts.htm

News from the Medical Front

What You Eat Plays a Big Part in Fending Off Depression!

Researchers often wonder why the people of the lower Mediterranean countries don't develop depression as often as those who live in northern Europe. One thing they discovered: It isn't the sunny days or a nice blue ocean to look at. It's their diet. They studied more than 10,000 Spaniards who filled out a long food questionnaire. Then they checked for depression some years later. Those who consumed more olive oil and less fat, had a moderate intake of alcohol and dairy products, and ate a lot of beans, fruit, nuts, cereal, vegetables, and fish were far less likely to be depressed.

Doctors at Tufts University offer this happy-plate advice:

-  Eat breakfast and have healthy snacks to avoid drops of blood sugar.
-  Try complex carbohydrates like whole grains to help you feel calm.
-  Protein can boost alertness; folate found in fortified cereals, leafy vegetables, okra, asparagus, bananas, melons, beans, orange juice, and tomato juice is also important.
-  Don't overdo alcohol – it's a powerful depressant. Coffee is an antidepressant, but too much gives you the jitters. Skip chocolate. It improves mood at first, but makes you feel even worse when its effect wears off.



April 28, 2010 turned out to be a beautiful day for the Walk at Lunch activity. Pictured above in front are Division of Personnel (DOP) Director Sara Walker and Mary Jane Ayoob. Photo by Teresa Martin of the DOP.

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taste, or portion size of the items offered. One benefit derives naturally from the State taking over control – making a profit can give way to simply meeting operational costs. A second option involves using Work Release Program participants for many of the positions, which will minimize labor costs to just a few, necessary full-time positions.

Ferguson adds, “By fall, we will have an affordable eating locale that meets expectations in service, quality, and price.”

Pencil In ...



Mountain Fiddler, the 1976 album by **Sen. Robert Byrd** on which he performed pieces of Appalachian music **will be re-released in late July.** Watch you local news media for details.



Achievement seems to be connected with action. Successful men and women make mistakes. They keep mistakes, but they don't quit.

~~Conrad Hilton

The Public Employees Daycare Center



is now accepting enrollment applications for children ages 12 months to 5 years



Located at
302 Jefferson Street
Charleston, WV 25311
Phone: 304-720-0839