



Let's Be Honest About Sen. Robert Byrd

Fox News commentator Fred Barnes put it well when he said, “[Byrd] epitomized what most members of Congress try to do: maximize the flow of Federal funds to their state or district. Only he did it better. He was not only extraordinarily effective in funneling largess to West Virginia; he was unabashed about taking credit for it in an ostentatious way.”

Citizens Against Government Waste denounced Byrd as the “King of Pork.” In 2006, a group called Porkbusters gave Byrd their Lifetime Achievement Award for establishing “a pork record second to none.” Should being the biggest porker of all time really be called an achievement?

There are more than 50 projects in West Virginia — all financed by taxpayers in other states — that are named for Byrd or his late wife Erma. Byrd frequently gloated about how much loot he was able to snare for his state. Here, for example, are his remarks at the dedication ceremony four years ago of the Robert C. Byrd Biotechnology Center at Marshall University in Huntington: The effort began, he said, “with a visit to my office, yeah! Yeah, man. Yeah, man, a visit to my office, yeah” by the school’s president. So Byrd then proceeded to do what he did best: “I rolled up my sleeves to do the work in Congress to secure the Federal funding. Yeah, man, you’re looking at Big Daddy. Big Daddy!”

As you can see, Byrd loved to brag about how easily he got the Federal spigot turned in West Virginia’s direction: “I’ve been [in the Senate] longer than anybody else ... so I added \$35.6 million. That ain’t chicken feed. No man, that’s not little stuff. That’s not small stuff.”

Actually, when compared to a Federal budget of \$3.8 trillion, and a deficit of \$1.3 trillion, that is chicken feed to our big-spenders in Washington. But not in West Virginia, one of the most impoverished states in the union. Which brings up a point I have not heard anyone else make: *Why did all those untold billions that Byrd was able to grab for his state do so little good for the people there?*

Think about it for a minute. Thanks to Byrd’s efforts, along with a compliant bureaucracy and kowtowing administrations, for most of the 51 years he served in the Senate, West Virginians received more bang for their bucks—that is, more tax dollars back from Uncle Sam than they contributed—than any other state in the union.

If sucking at the teat of Big Government makes you stronger and healthier, why isn’t West Virginia one of the richest states in the nation? Instead, when measured by the jobs its has created, the pay for those jobs, the living standards of its inhabitants, the quality of medical care and education and just about any other standard that’s important to your quality of life, West Virginia is a disaster.

Byrd could serve as a poster boy for the bad effects of big government. Instead, the mass media acted as though there was something good and noble about his life’s work — well, about his life work on behalf of big government at least. The media downplayed another aspect of Byrd’s life. Presumably it is now deemed ancient history that Byrd, in his youth, was an enthusiastic supporter of the Ku Klux Klan. In fact, when he was 24, he helped form a chapter of the noxious organization in his hometown. He was elected to the state legislature in 1946 and the House of Representatives six years later. In those early campaigns, he made sure he used the “n” word in every speech he made. Later in life, Byrd claimed to have softened his stance against blacks. But he was still a foul-mouthed bigot. Four years ago, to show how “fair and balanced” he had become, he told a TV interviewer, “I’ve seen a lot of white niggers in my time.” Gee, Senator, how fair-minded of you.

Let’s be honest here. Byrd spent the first half of his adult life as one of the most racist, bigoted,



Written by [Wallis W. Wood](#) on July 9, 2010

downright nasty politicians the South has ever produced. He then spent the second half of his life building monuments to himself with your money.

This is someone we should admire?

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