

If anyone thinks I am exaggerating, I will give just one example. The filibuster is a prime guarantee of the principle of minority rights in the Senate. The filibuster is a device by which a single Senator can bring the Senate to a halt if that Senator believes his cause is just. But our partisan warfare has often transformed this unique, fundamental Senate tool into a political weapon which has been abused. As a result, there have lately been efforts to abolish it. If this should ever happen, a vital and historic protection of the liberties of the American people will be lost, and the Senate will cease to function as the one institution that has provided protection for the views and the prerogatives of a minority.

I lament the ever-increasing costs of running for a Senate seat. 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, too much of a lawmaker's energy is now consumed in raising money for the next election or to pay off the last one.

I lament that too many legislators in both parties continue to regard the Chief Executive in a roll much more elevated than the Framers of the Constitution ever intended. The Framers of the Constitution did not envision the Office of the President of the United States as having the attributes of royalty. We as legislators have a responsibility to work with the Chief Executive, but it was intended for this to be a two-way street, not a one-way street. The Senate must again rise and be the coequal branch of Government which the Constitution of the United States intended it to be.

I lament the decline of the thoroughness of Senate committee hearings. In its classic study, "Congressional Government," Woodrow Wilson pointed out that the "informing function of Congress is its most important function." This was revealed in 1973 when, after 8 days of hearings and after hours upon hours of questioning, L. Patrick Gray, President Nixon's nominee to be Director of the FBI, revealed that White House counselor John Dean had lied—lied—lied—to FBI investigators, thus beginning the unraveling of the Watergate coverup. Today, we have the knowledge this could not happen with the time restrictions that are in place on the Senate's hearings.

I am pleased to say that during my half century in the Senate, there have also been positive changes in the Senate. I will mention a few. The first is the Senate has become more open and the Senate has become more constituent friendly. This was highlighted in 1986 when television cameras were finally installed and the American people all across this country could watch their Senators debate the issues of the day on C-SPAN. I am proud to have been a part—though a small part—but a part of that innovation.

During my tenure, the Senate has become more open and it has become

more diverse. When I came here in 1959, there was only one—one female Senator. In the 111th Congress, there are 17 women in the Senate. In the 50 years prior to my service, not a single—not one African American was elected to the Senate. During my 50 years here, three African Americans have been elected to the Senate. This is a small number, but one of those three has now been elected to the highest office in the land—President of the United States. So, my fellow colleagues, we have come a very, very, very long way.

Let me conclude my remarks by simply acknowledging it has been a wonderful 50 years serving in this "great forum of constitutional American liberty." I only wish my darling wife, who now sings in the heavenly choir above, were here today to say with me that I look forward—yes, look forward to the next 50 years. Amen. Amen.

That concludes my remarks.

I yield the floor and I say good night to the Chair and all the people here.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANDERS). The clerk will call the roll. The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MINNESOTA SENATE RACE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, earlier today there were some comments about the Minnesota Senate race that I would like to briefly address. The only people who have pronounced the Minnesota Senate race over are Washington Democrats and the candidate who is the current custodian of the most votes. The people of Minnesota certainly do not believe the Minnesota Senate race is over. The Minneapolis Star Tribune, which never could be confused for a conservative publication, wrote an editorial in their paper today entitled, "Court Review is Key in Senate Recount."

Writing about yesterday's Canvassing Board findings, the editorial says—and again, this is in today's Minneapolis Star Tribune—the editorial today says:

As Minnesotans are learning, that determination is not the same as declaring a winner in this amazingly close race.

It went on to say:

Both Franken and Coleman should want court-ordered answers to questions that the Canvassing Board could not answer.

The winner of this contest deserves the legitimacy that would come with a court's politically independent finding that he got more votes than his opponent.

The bottom line is this: The Senate race in Minnesota will be determined by Minnesotans, not here in the Senate.

#### OPENING OF THE 111TH CONGRESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the opening of a new Congress is always an

important moment in the life of our Nation. Every time a gavel falls on a new legislative term, we are reminded of the grandeur of the document we are sworn to uphold. We are grateful to the citizens of our respective States—in my case the people of Kentucky—who give us the opportunity to serve. We are thankful once again that the U.S. Constitution has endured to guarantee the freedom and the prosperity of so many for so long.

The growth of our Nation over the years is one of the most remarkable feats of man, and it was far from inevitable. When Congress first organized under the Constitution, the United States consisted of 11 States and 3 million citizens. Today, more people than that live in Kentucky alone. Yet despite a bloody Civil War, the arrival of millions of immigrants, economic collapse, World Wars, social unrest, and the long-delayed realization of America's original promise of equality for all, we have come together as a body and as a nation. We have not just endured these things, we have flourished, and that is well worth remembering and celebrating as the 111th Congress convenes.

As we meet in January of 2009, America faces many serious challenges. None is more urgent than our troubled economy. President-elect Obama was one of those who recognized the gravity of the current troubles early on. He reassured many by fielding a solid team of economic advisers. He agrees with Republicans that we should put more money in the pockets of middle-class American families by cutting their taxes, and he has proposed working with Republicans to create jobs and to encourage long-term economic stability with a massive domestic spending bill the details of which Members of Congress and the American people are increasingly eager to see.

After a long and rough campaign season, it is encouraging for many Americans to see that the two parties in Washington are in broad agreement about something so important to their daily lives. And Republicans will work with President-elect Obama to make sure that as we consider this legislation the taxpayer is not taken for a ride.

All of us agree the economy needs help. We are concerned and taxpayers are concerned. But if we are going to appropriate an unprecedented amount of money from the Treasury for this spending bill, it is absolutely essential that we determine up front whether the spending is going to be wasteful or wise.

Specifically, the American people should have at least a week, and it looks as if we will have more than that, to see what this enormous spending plan includes. President Clinton proposed a \$16 billion stimulus package in his first year in office. Congress, back in 1993, rejected it for being too expensive. Now Democrats in Congress are proposing a stimulus that would