

WASHINGTON COLLEGE

CITATION

Senator Birch Bayh

Senator Birch Bayh, the only person since the Founding Fathers to draft more than one Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, has devoted his life to championing the rights of all Americans – especially those whom history had too long pushed to the margins.

Arriving in Washington in the Kennedy years, when America was on the brink of crisis and change, the young Senator from Indiana stepped into the vanguard of efforts to secure civil rights for African-Americans, cosponsoring the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act. Later, as a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, he led the successful efforts to defeat President Nixon's nominations of two segregationist judges to the Supreme Court. The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights honored Senator Bayh with its highest award for "his unyielding dedication to human equality and civil freedom."

Birch Bayh could justly be hailed as a hero on every American college and university campus. He authored Title IX of the Higher Education Act, which for the first time prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex in the classroom and on the athletic field, protecting both students and faculty. He also drafted the 26th Amendment to the Constitution, which lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 – and which, at the stroke of a pen, enfranchised 11 million young Americans, who previously had been considered old enough to die for their country in Vietnam but not old enough to vote for their president. In this current season of presidential primaries, as a new generation heeds the call to political engagement, we note that without those two sentences added to the Constitution, the majority of college-age Americans would still be disenfranchised today.

As Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments, Senator Bayh was also the author of the 25th Amendment, which established rules for presidential succession and disability. He was the principal architect of the Equal Rights Amendment, which passed Congress but has not yet been ratified by the states. He drafted the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, protecting citizens from eavesdropping by the federal government, and worked to reform the military justice system, defending the rights of the men and women who defend our country.

Since leaving the Senate in 1981, Senator Bayh has continued to fight for the principles he championed there. The Institute Against Prejudice and Violence, which he founded, laid the groundwork for federal and state hate-crime laws. He also continues to work toward reform that would abolish the Electoral College and provide for direct popular election of the president. The Washington College community is privileged to know Senator Bayh as a Senior Fellow of the C.V. Starr Center and chair of the Senatorial Colloquy on American History and Politics.

In recognition of the history that he has made through his exceptional career in service to our nation, and of his ongoing contributions to our academic community as a teacher, mentor, and role model, Washington College is pleased to award to Birch Evans Bayh, Jr., the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.

Baird Tipson
President
February 22, 2008

B I O G R A P H Y



Senator Birch E. Bayh, Jr.

SENATOR BIRCH E. BAYH, JR. of Indiana was elected to the United States Senate in 1962—at a time when John F. Kennedy’s New Frontier had put a spirit of youthfulness, energy and innovation at the forefront of American political life. Senator Bayh was embraced as a rising star by President Kennedy and then by President Johnson. Senator Bayh helped to draft the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. He also won renown as a constitutional expert. He drafted the 25th Amendment, which established the rules for presidential succession. He then authored the 26th Amendment, which lowered the voting age from 21 to 18. With its passage, Senator Bayh became the only American since the Founding Fathers to Draft more than one Amendment to the Constitution.

At a time when institutionalized gender discrimination was still rampant at American colleges and universities, Senator Bayh wrote and passed Title IX of the Higher Education Act, which prohibited sex-based discrimination in academia.

Having left the Senate in 1981, Senator Bayh continues to fight for the principles he championed in office. He is a Senior Fellow of the C.V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience, and he has taught the Senatorial Colloquy on American History and Politics at Washington College.