

**NAMING CEREMONY FOR THE BIRCH BAYH
FEDERAL BUILDING AND UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE
OCTOBER 24, 2003**

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It is truly an honor to be selected to speak at this historic occasion recognizing the public career of former Senator Birch Bayh. Most of us are familiar with Birch Bayh's distinguished career in the United States Senate. However, prior to his election to the Senate, he served with great distinction for eight years in the Indiana House of Representatives. I would like to tell you about those years and a few of his contributions in the area of education in Indiana.

In 1954, at the age of 26, Birch Bayh, operating the family farm in Shirkieville, ran as a Democrat for the Indiana State legislature. He was running against a candidate who had the support of the powerful political machine in Vigo County. With the untiring help of his wife Marvella and by shaking every hand they could find, he scored an upset victory and was sworn in as a Representative on January 7, 1955.

The new year brought new responsibilities as Representative Bayh became familiar with the workings of the legislature. In addition, on December 26, 1955, he became the father of a baby boy whom we all now know as Senator Evan Bayh.

Birch was reelected to the state legislature in 1956 and at the end of the 1957 session he decided to leave the family farm and concentrate on politics. He enrolled in law school at Indiana University and in October 1957, Birch, Marvella and Evan moved to Bloomington.

The two years following Dwight Eisenhower's reelection in 1956 were a rather dismal time for Democrats in Indiana. The Republican party dominated the state. Few Democrats had much desire to serve in leadership positions. Birch was the exception. He ran for and was elected minority leader in 1957.

Two years later the tide turned and the Democrats took control in Indiana. Birch went from being minority leader to Speaker of the House in 1959. He was 30 years old, the youngest speaker ever.

Now just think about that for a moment. Birch was married, a new father, a law student and Speaker of the Indiana House of Representatives. Most of us lawyers well remember those law school days when we thought life was hectic when we had to make a 9:00 a.m. civil procedure class. It seems to me that our Creator doesn't make men like Birch Bayh anymore. His tenure as Speaker lasted two years as the Republicans regained control and Birch went back to being minority leader in 1961.

Of Birch's many accomplishments in the Indiana House, several related to the education of our children. Birch's parents were both school teachers and his interest in education comes quite naturally. As Speaker, Birch led the efforts to reorganize Indiana's public school system. At that time in Indiana, most rural

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counties did not have consolidated school districts. In many counties there were four or five small high schools, some with fewer than 20 students. A concern arose as to the quality of education these students were receiving compared to those students in the larger consolidated school districts.

Birch took on the task to see that all Indiana students were offered the same quality of education. As you may well imagine, there was a great deal of opposition to any form of consolidation. Questions arose such as, "What's wrong with the school we have now?" "If we consolidate, which town gets the school house?" "Will my child have to ride a bus to a new school?" "Who will control our school?"

Those favoring consolidation argued that the larger consolidated schools would have more to offer the students academically and socially. Also, in years past it was difficult for the smaller schools to compete in athletics with the larger schools. By consolidating the schools, the playing field would be more level in all areas.

The resistance to consolidation was strong in many counties, and it was through the hard work and dedication of many brave legislators, led by Speaker Bayh, that the effort to reorganize Indiana's schools was successful. Birch's interest in education didn't stop at school reorganization. Through his leadership, teacher salaries increased by 50 percent and Indiana's universities received increased funding.

Ladies and gentlemen, he accomplished all of this by the age of 34. In 1962, invigorated by the election of John F. Kennedy, Birch ran for the United States Senate against incumbent Senator Homer Capehart. Birch was considered the underdog. However, by campaigning hard, driving all over the state, sleeping in his car and visiting with voters everywhere he could, he defeated Senator Capehart by 10,000 votes statewide. It was clear that Hoosier voters looked Birch over and thought he was quite a guy.

In a few moments, Judge Hamilton will speak to you about Birch Bayh's distinguished United States Senate career. But now, if you will, permit me a personal excursion. I met Senator Birch Bayh in the Fall of 1975 in my home state of Iowa. I had just graduated college and he was there as a candidate for President of the United States. Through a family friend, I was put in touch with the campaign director for Iowa and subsequently joined the cause. In those days campaigns during the Iowa caucuses were quite different from today's costly, high-powered operations. I believe we had, in addition to the Senator, four or five full time people working the entire state. One being myself and another was that fellow I mentioned earlier—Evan Bayh. I could tell you some stories, but time is short. Suffice it to say it was an interesting experience for all and, as they say, the rest is history.

Although Chief Judge McKinney likes to tell people my appointment as federal judge was based entirely on merit, and I certainly appreciate his confidence in me, I must say that I would not be standing here today as a United States District Judge without the support of Evan Bayh, who forwarded my name to President Clinton, and the calming presence of former Senator Birch Bayh who sat with me during my confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee. It was very comforting to me when Chairman Orrin Hatch went out

of his way to greet Birch and to let him know how pleased he was to see him at the hearing.

I have been truly blessed to have the friendship of Birch Bayh, and I believe all Hoosiers have been blessed to have this extraordinary individual represent us in the Indiana House of Representatives and the United States Senate. Congratulations, Senator Bayh on this well deserved honor.

