



UNITED STATES SENATOR ★ SERVING THE CITIZENS OF IDAHO

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
December 7, 2007

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Hail the Lion of Idaho **by Senator Larry Craig**

December is upon us and 2007 is drawing to a close. I was reminded not long ago that this year marks the 100th anniversary of the election of William E. Borah, “The Lion of Idaho,” to the United States Senate. As more and more people move into Idaho, I realized that not everybody knows about this state’s most famous Senator.

I have always found Borah to be a fascinating character, and I’ve taken it upon myself to study his career and the work he did for Idaho. I actually have the privilege of using his desk on the Senate floor, although it hasn’t always belonged to Idaho senators. More than 30 names are written inside, from various states. Some of the more famous ones include Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, Senator Lee Metcalf of Montana, and Senator Jacob Javits of New York.

It is truly humbling to sit at the same place so ably occupied by Borah for 33 years, from 1907 to 1940. He was best known for successfully leading the charge in the Senate to keep the United States out of the League of Nations and the World Court after World War I. Despite the fact that he never traveled abroad, foreign relations were his primary interest, and in 1924, he became chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Borah was also famous for his eloquent and powerful speeches. Stories have been told that mention how word traveled quickly when Senator Borah took to the floor of the Senate. Reporters quickly filled the press gallery, and Senators filled their desks just to hear him speak.

The qualities I admire most about Senator Borah are the strength and independence he displayed throughout his career. Despite his close friendship with President Teddy Roosevelt, Borah had reservations about the creation of the federal forest reserves, which are now known as the national forests. As it turns out, many Idahoans at the time were concerned too, and many of those concerns remain today.

During my first term in the Senate, I got a once-in-a-lifetime chance to “pinch-hit” for Senator Borah. Let me explain. When the Russell Senate Office Building was being remodeled in 1994, telephone workers found a letter in the midst of their renovation work. Written in 1917, the letter was nearly 80 years old, and was addressed to Senator Borah! In the letter, a rancher from Leadore asked for copies of a report on diseases in cattle and horses.

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Today, many of the same issues and requests for assistance continue, so I was happy to continue the strong Idaho tradition of constituent service. After a little research, my staff and I managed to find a descendant of that rancher, and we answered the letter. In this very small way, it was an honor to help conclude this piece of business on the great senator's behalf.

In 1936, Time Magazine named Borah the "most famed senator of the century." That year, he ran for president to save small businesses from the encroachment of FDR's New Deal programs. Even today, in the halls of the Capitol, it's clear that Borah's fame lives on. In a sign of affection from thousands of passers-by, one of the shoes on Borah's statue shines from being touched by so many. Today, as it was nearly 70 years ago, people feel a connection to him. He makes us proud of Idaho.