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A TRIBUTE TO RETIRING SENATOR J. STROM THURMOND

RICHARD W. RILEY*

I am so pleased that the *South Carolina Law Review* is honoring Senator Strom Thurmond for his nearly-eighty years of public service.

Strom Thurmond has served South Carolina in the schoolhouse, in the courthouse, and in the State House. He has served our great country in the military and in the U. S. Senate, and he has been a significant influence on the White House. In whatever public arena Strom found himself, he always fought for what he believed to be the best interests of the people of the state he loved—South Carolina.

Strom and I have been connected to different political parties and we have differed on many issues. But I am so proud of the fact that we always have remained friends. When President Clinton sent my name to the Senate for confirmation as Secretary of Education, Senator Thurmond personally took me around to meet with every Republican Senator on the Committee that would consider my nomination. He didn't ask them to vote for my confirmation; he *instructed* them how to vote. Senator Hollings did the same with the Democrats. Needless to say, I was confirmed unanimously.

People in Washington were surprised by this bipartisan action. I had to explain to them our strength of friendship and our bond as sons of South Carolina. For Strom Thurmond, this is much more important than the political party to which one belongs.

A mark of a good politician is the ability to adjust his or her thinking to changing times. Senator Thurmond exemplifies this important strength. His many decades of public service have given him the opportunity to watch history develop. In fact, he is a living part of that history. But it is to his credit that he has been able to adjust to changing times.

During World War II, Strom Thurmond served with honor and distinction as a General in the Army. Then he served in the Senate during the Korean Conflict, Vietnam, Bosnia, and the Gulf War—always holding to his unwavering support for a strong and effective military.

As a lawyer and a former judge, Senator Thurmond took an active interest in gaining Senate approval for many federal judges from South Carolina. He has had an impact on lawyers and our nation's

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laws in many ways, but his influence on the selection of judges is perhaps his greatest.

We all know, though, that Strom Thurmond wrote the book on constituent service. He loves his fellow South Carolinians and he has been so effective in staying connected to them as individual human beings and as friends, rather than as members of one group or another. That certainly will be a significant part of his legacy.

So it is an honor for me to pay tribute to this fine servant of the people of South Carolina and of the nation—my friend, Strom Thurmond.