

WYOMING'S JUNIOR SENATOR HAS BIG SHOES TO FILL

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PINE BLUFFS — Craig Thomas's untimely death from leukemia on June 4th is a great loss. His intelligent conservatism, his vigorous support of agricultural issues, energy independence to make America safer, and his staunch support of the unborn — all important to Wyomingites — was truly a blessing. Near the end, although news from his Washington office was upbeat, when he missed the first cloture vote on the immigration bill, I knew his passing was imminent.

After his death, Wyoming's Republican Party didn't drag its feet. On June 19th, under Chairman Fred Parady's able leadership, the 71-member State Central Committee triggered the procedure for selecting a qualified individual to replace Thomas. From 31 capable applicants, the Committee selected and sent to Governor Freudenthal names of three outstanding individuals; Tom Sansonetti, John Barrasso, and Cynthia Lummis. On Friday, June 22nd, the Governor appointed orthopedic surgeon and Natrona County State Senator, John Barrasso.

The following Monday, Barrasso was in D.C. Accompanied by Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY) and former Wyoming Senator Malcolm Wallop, he was sworn in by Vice-President Dick Cheney, received his credentials, and set up his office, utilizing the staff of his predecessor. His father is deceased. His mother and his two children made it to D.C. for his swearing-in despite short notice.

“To get sworn in by the Vice-President of the United States, I mean, what a unique experience in the chamber of the United States Senate,” Barrasso said afterwards, “. . . it just was overwhelming and humbling.”

The Country’s newest Senator will serve until January 2009; a special election in November 2008 will determine who will finish Thomas’s term, which runs until January 2013. He’s the second physician in the Senate; Tom Coburn (R-OK) is the other. “Given the age of this institution, it’s good to have another physician,” Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) said.

The junior Senator from Wyoming will work closely with Mike Enzi, who defeated him in the Republican primary in 1996, and went on to win the U.S. Senate seat, replacing Alan Simpson, a pro-abortion supporter who retired.

54 years old, John Anthony Barrasso, born July 21, 1952, is a board certified orthopedic surgeon who practiced in Casper. He earned his B.S. degree from Georgetown University in 1974, and graduated from its School of Medicine in 1978. He did his residency at Yale Medical School, married the former Linda Nix, had two children, Peter, 20, and Emma, 17, and later divorced.

Regarding his medical career, Wikipedia says: “In addition to his private practice, Barrasso is chief of staff of the Wyoming Medical Center, state President of the Wyoming Medical Society, president of the National Association of Physician Broadcasters, and a member of the American Medical Association’s Council of Ethics and Judicial Affairs.”

John is also a rodeo physician for the Professional Rodeo Cowboy’s Association,

volunteers as a team physician for Casper College, and several local high schools, has been chosen as Wyoming Physician of the Year, been awarded the Medal of Excellence by the Wyoming National Guard for his service to the Guard, and the Legislative Service Award from the VFW for his support of veteran's issues. He authors a regular newspaper column, *Keeping Wyoming Healthy*, and is well-known for his senior and elder care, including a monthly column on senior fitness, care and prevention, *Caring for Wyoming's Seniors*. All of this indicates a high level of energy and commitment to his chosen profession. He'll need to bring both to Washington.

Barrasso was elected a State Senator in 2002, and re-elected in 2006. He served on various Committees, including the Transportation and Highways Committee, which he chaired. He's conservative and pro-life. In his statement to the Central Committee, he said, "I believe in limited government, lower taxes, less spending, traditional family values, local control and a strong national defense." He also said he has voted "for prayer in schools, against gay marriage, and has sponsored legislation to protect the sanctity of life." The NRA gives him an "A" rating. Having worked with John and a dozen other pro-life members of the Legislature on the Legislative Pro-Life Caucus – a first this past year in Wyoming's Legislature – I know he spearheaded SF118, Homicide during Pregnancy, sponsored HB68, Meth Endangering Children before Birth, and was supportive of the Caucus. However, he did not sponsor either HB144, A Woman's right to know, or HB79, Reporting of Abortions, both of which were opposed by Wyoming's medical profession.

"I've spent my entire adult life working to make Wyoming a better place – not

just through my work as a state legislator, but as a doctor and activist who believes strongly in giving back to the community,” John said in his Application for Consideration as a Candidate. “My number one priority in the US Senate will be to make sure that Wyoming continues to receive the kind of strong representation we have come to enjoy from Senator Craig Thomas.”

His entrance into those hallowed halls of Congress has raised some eyebrows. Blast Off!, a virtually irrelevant liberal website, referred to him as that “. . . batshit fundie far-right whacko.” But it also refers to President Bush as “Drunky McStagger,” and sports a blog featuring Socialist Nancy Pelosi, so I guess we know where its sympathies lie.

But this takes the cake. A homosexual website which shall go unnamed, wrote an article about John, showing him dressed in a dark suit, white dress shirt, and red pattern tie. The site referred to his traditional clothing as “that Nazi outfit...”

Now wait just a minute! We all know that only Republicans resort to name-calling; at least, according to liberals.

Barrasso’s first vote as a Senator came on the immigration bill. He voted against cloture. “People who break the law do not deserve amnesty,” he said. “Some people support amnesty. I do not.”

Mitch McConnell again: “Senator Barrasso has big shoes to fill, but according to all accounts, he’s up to the job.” And it appears that, like his colleague Senator Enzi, he’ll staunchly support pro-life issues.

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