

A-10 Sunday News Journal, Wilmington, Del., March 12, 1978

Busing vote totals

WASHINGTON — Here is a summary of how Delaware's senators voted on all busing-related matters, including procedural motions since 1973:

YEAR	BIDEN		ROTH	
	Pro-busing	Anti-busing	Pro-busing	Anti-busing
1973	2	2	0	3
1974	0	13	0	13
1975	0	3	0	3
1977	0	3	0	3
TOTAL	12	21	0	22

Biden's vote killed 2 key measures

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former Sen. Edward Gurney, R-Ft., to prohibit busing pupils beyond the school closest to their homes and to allow all past busing orders to be reopened for modification.

The anti-busing forces, which had been little more than a nuisance factor in Congress for several years, felt the tide was ripe to win a big one. Convinced that it was to happen, Sen. Biden was not at all surprised that September and postal legislation against busing was increasing.

"It has been a long time since which the vast majority of Americans have voted a question on busing is a Gurney vote," Biden said.

The lobbyists on both sides were out in force. They knew the vote would be close, and they were right. The Gurney Amendment was rejected, 48-47.

Biden voted against it. If he had voted the other way, it would have passed. And considering that anti-busing sentiment in the House was probably weaker than it is in the Senate, it probably would have passed the House as well.

Seven months later Sen. Biden had had their backs up trying to reject a new tough anti-busing amendment that the House had adopted to a narrow vote. The House had the votes but the anti-busing people had time on their side.

It was 10 days before Christmas. Everyone in Congress wanted to go home. So southern conservatives began a filibuster against the efforts to remove the anti-busing language, hoping the liberals would force it.

The liberals tried to invoke cloture, which means cut off debate and a filibuster is over. Biden was a filibuster in his own right. The closure effort, with Biden's support, succeeded 57-47.

If Biden had voted the other way, the liberals would have been one vote short of the two-thirds majority and the anti-busing language would have stayed in the bill.

Ironically, less than a year later, Biden was on the Senate floor vigorously arguing that almost identical language be adopted.

Biden's voting record on busing during the last five years would indicate that his conversion occurred dramatically — in September, 1975 — when he introduced the new measure. Biden's Amendment, which introduced the new measure in the Senate's swing to the anti-busing forces.

The Congressional Quarterly Almanac for 1975, issued for historians of the future, indicates the same thing.

It highlights the Biden Amendment as the first anti-busing effort to be pushed by a liberal. Previous and more than one other northern Democratic senators appeared to be converted at the same time.

The Biden Amendment passed, 90-41. It prohibited use of federal funds to assign public school students by race. But both Biden and the measure now sit in a dusty drawer, overruled by his goals and was ambiguous enough to receive several interpretations.

Sen. Robert F. Byrd, D-W.Va., a major Republican who now is the Senate majority leader but then was the Democratic who apparently recognized the swing mood of the Senate and voted to Biden's rescue with his own "perfecting amendment."

It passed, 51-45, and to this day federal civil rights officials speak disparagingly of the Byrd Amendment as the first real legislative obstacle to busing for desegregation.

Students of political pragmatism can point to the autumn of 1975 as the time when Delawareans first began to confront the fact that busing was desirable. A federal court had ruled several months before that integration visits in Cape Castle County had to begin in 1975, serious discussions were under way concerning alternative desegregation plans.

And a student of such events could conclude that Biden's switch was merely a reflection of the mood of his constituents. A closer reading of Biden's public statements, however, indicates that his conversion was not so dramatic.

Even when he cast the vote that stopped the conservative filibuster in December 1975, he was expressing reservations about busing.

"Busing, it seems to me, is a

Biden and Roth votes on busing bills

From the Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Here are the votes of Delaware's two U.S. senators, Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D) and William V. Roth Jr. (R), on key anti-busing amendments since 1973.

YEAR	BIDEN	ROTH
1973	0	3
1974	0	13
1975	0	3
1977	0	3
TOTAL	0	22

WASHINGTON — Biden and Roth voted on key anti-busing amendments since 1973:

1973

1974

1975

1977

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Men's garment bag, Reg. \$42, Sale \$31.50


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