



Dick DiSabatino Award Presented to Robert L. Byrd

IN A SURPRISE ANNOUNCEMENT at the 187th Annual Dinner, the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce presented The Honorable Robert L. Byrd with the esteemed Dick DiSabatino Award, which was established in the mid-1990s to recognize significant contributions to shape opinion and public policy in the state of Delaware.

“It’s a universal truth in Delaware politics that when you need advice, you call Byrdie,” said President Joe Biden in a congratulatory letter to Byrd. 2024 marks Byrd’s 50th legislative session. Byrd has spent a lifetime in Delaware politics, having grown up with his mother—Helen G. Byrd—involved in politics. He ran for the Delaware House of Representatives in 1974 and at that time was the youngest person ever elected to the Delaware General Assembly. During his tenure in the House, his colleagues elected him to serve as majority whip.

Considered a “Jedi Master of government arts,” some of his most notable achievements include the legalization of slot machines and his involvement in one of the state’s most important pieces of legislation, the Delaware Financial Center Development Act of 1981 which created over 40,000 jobs and established Delaware as a financial hub.

After serving in the General Assembly, Byrd became a lobbyist for the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce in 1977 until he moved into private practice at Wood Byrd & Associates in 1987, and ultimately

starting his own government relations firm—The Byrd Group, now ByrdGomes—in 2009, where he has represented several nonprofit agencies. Byrd is still very active with the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce, serving on and chairing multiple committees. He has also sat on the Board of Governors since 1993.

“It’s a universal truth in Delaware politics that when you need advice, you call Byrdie.” —President Joe Biden

“The Dick DiSabatino Award has always been given to a leader—regardless of party—who always puts Delaware first ahead of any political or personal gain,” summarized Governor John Carney. “For the past half-century, nobody has been better than Bob Byrd in developing solutions to public policy problems. He always puts the best interests of the State of Delaware first, and the business community and his clients second. And it’s never been about him. He’s always been motivated to do what’s best for Delaware.”