

VP Biden dedicates USC's Hollings Library

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JULY 23, 2010 -- COLUMBIA, S.C. — Vice President Joe Biden made such a glowing speech about former U.S. Sen. Ernest Hollings at a library dedication ceremony Friday that Hollings said there will be no need for a eulogy at his funeral.

"All we have to do is play Biden," Hollings said of his friend's speech. "I'm going to play it every other day."

Biden and 1,000 invited guests laughed and cheered as the University of South Carolina dedicated a new library named for the 88-year-old former senator and South Carolina governor. Biden later attended a fundraiser for Democratic U.S. Rep. John Spratt in Columbia.

Hollings reveled in the attention at his ceremony.

"Having served 36 years as the junior senator to Strom Thurmond, I've had enough damn humility and I need a little arrogance and you just gave me a double dose," he said to Biden.

The Hollings library - which USC president Harris Pastides says has been dubbed "The Fritz" after Hollings' nickname - is an \$18 million, 50,000-square-foot library that is home to the university's rare books and political collections. It's also the headquarters for the university's efforts to digitize parts of its collection that will be available on the Internet. Hollings secured \$14 million in federal funds to build the library, which is attached to the back of USC's main library.

"This is a big blinking deal," Hollings said, paraphrasing Biden's now infamous comments to President Obama after health care legislation passed earlier this year.

Biden said the facility was a testament to Hollings' life of public service that started after he graduated from South Carolina's military college, The Citadel, and went to fight in World War II.

"He's a man that I would argue contributed more over the course of his life to the state of South Carolina than any man in the political history of this state," Biden said of Hollings.

After returning from war, Hollings got his law degree from USC and was elected to the South Carolina House at age 26. He was elected lieutenant governor then governor before winning the U.S. Senate seat in 1966 and holding onto it until he retired in 2005.

Hollings' papers from that 50-year political career make up the largest single part of the new library's political collections, which document the careers of many of the state's leaders.

Hollings sounded like he was back on the campaign trail as he went on a mini-rant about the U.S. economy and what he thinks should be done to get it growing again. He said he was just trying to thank Biden for coming to the dedication.

"The only way I can thank him is to try to help him save the nation and save Obama," Hollings said.

Biden later attended a fundraiser for Spratt, who is facing one of the more serious challenges of his 28 years in the House.

Groups of Tea Party activists held signs that said "Sack Spratt" and criticized the Obama administration as they stood outside the State Museum where the fundraiser was held.

Biden said it's "understandable" that many Americans are angry about the nation's economic situation. But when voters start paying attention to what Republicans are offering, Democrats will see their prospects improve, he said.

The vice president told the 150 Democrats attending the event that they must do a better job between now and the election explaining the benefits of recent legislative victories, including health care.

"Here's the problem - we've been working so hard to get these major new building blocks laid down," Biden said. "They are so big, so heavy, that the American people don't understand what's in it for them yet. Now that the hard lifting is done, we're going to spend the next 90 days going out explaining to people exactly what it means to them."

What was said

House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn:

"I tell people all the time that I've learned a whole lot from Fritz Hollings, a lot of what to do and a lot of what not to say."

"Up there in Washington, especially on the floor of the House of Representatives, we refer to each other as 'my good friend' and we really don't mean it, but I really do mean it when I call Joe Biden 'my good friend.' "

"Ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure for me to present to you a mainstream American who is articulate and bright and clean."

(While introducing Biden, a reference to Biden's famous campaign gaffe backhandedly complimenting Barack Obama.)

Vice President Joe Biden:

"These days, Democrats and Republicans aren't supposed to be friends, but (Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham) is one of my closest friends. He's one of my wife Jill's closest friends. ... Lindsey and I travel all

over the world. We always go to places where they're shooting at us, literally shooting at us."

"Fritz was the first person on a national political scale talking about how a child cannot learn, cannot develop, cannot have an even shot if they don't have proper nutrition when they are young,"

"I miss being referred to on a daily basis as Joltin' Joe."

(Biden on what Hollings used to call him.)

Fritz Hollings himself:

"(Senate Majority Leader) Harry Reid called me yesterday and he said Fritz, I didn't know you could read, much less (establish) a library."

"Joe, (Biden) I can tell you right now having served for 36 years as the junior senator for Strom (Thurmond), I have enough damned humility. I need a little arrogance, and you gave me a double dose."

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