The Life and Career of Joseph Biden: Senator and Lawyer

The main qualification he stressed, and that others have stressed about him, is experience. As one of the senators from Delaware, he’s been in the public eye for years. He was first elected to the US Senate in 1970, and has served ever since. Incredibly, he cast his 10,000th Senate vote in 1999. His experience led Senator Barack Obama to pick him to shore up the biggest perceived weakness Senator Obama has: inexperience.

Senator Biden was born on November 20th, 1942, in Scranton, Pennsylvania, the first of four children. In 1953, the Biden family moved to Delaware, where Biden has resided ever since. He famously takes a train home to Delaware every night, which is around a hundred miles or so from Washington, DC.

As a child, Biden suffered from stuttering. He was afflicted by the speech impediment clear into his early twenties, when he overcame it by reciting poetry in front of a mirror. Biden graduated in 1961 from Archmere Academy and then went to the University of Delaware in Newark. He got his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1965 with a double major in history and political science.

Like many others with those degrees, Biden then went to law school, attending the Syracuse University College of Law, where he got his JD in 1968. He was admitted to the Delaware bar in 1969, at the age of 27.

Joe Biden then began to practice law, and ran for the US Senate in 1972, beating out the incumbent in a strong grassroots campaign. Meanwhile, he had married the former Neilia Hunter in 1966, and together they had had three children.

A few weeks after Biden’s election to the Senate, and before he was sworn in, personal tragedy struck when his wife and year-old daughter were killed in an car accident while Christmas shopping. Biden’s two sons were critically injured, but both eventually recovered.

In a pivotal decision, he debated resigning from the Senate to care for his two remaining children but was persuaded not to. He was sworn in from their bedside, and hasn’t really been challenged since in an election for his Senate seat.

Biden married Jill Jacobs in 1975, and had his fourth child, a daughter, with her.

Biden has run for president twice: once in 1988 and once in 2008, both times for the Democratic nomination. He lost each time, having been forced to withdraw from the first run following a plagiarism scandal. In 2008, he simply didn’t get the votes, though he has since been tapped to become Senator Obama’s running mate.

Biden teaches Constitutional law as an adjunct professor at Widener University Law School, and has done so since 1991. Students have said he is a great professor, at least when his duties allow him to teach his classes.

Biden has long served on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and is currently its chairman. He has also served on the Judiciary Committee, and was also its chairman in the past.

In his Judiciary Committee role, Biden played an instrumental part in confirming many of the justices on the US Supreme Court. In particular, Biden is known for his somewhat controversial role in the failed nomination of Robert Bork back in the 1980s.

With over ten thousand votes in the Senate, in addition to having chaired two of the most powerful Senate committees, there is no question that Joe Biden is very experienced, indeed. And it is that experience that gives many voters comfort as they consider whether they should cast their votes for the less experienced Senator Obama.