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## FEBRUARY 22-28, 1863

In a last ditch effort to try to stop
West Virginia from becoming a state,
U.S. Senator John Carlile introduced a
bill that would have postponed statehood
until Union forces regained control of
13 counties in southwestern Virginia.

The move sent shockwaves throughout the territory as Carlile of Harrison County had been an ardent supporter of statehood. What motivated Carlile to change his mind remains unclear, but some historians think that as a slaveholder Carlile opposed the push to make West Virginia a state because of the Willey Amendment, which called for gradual emancipation of slaves.

Though the U.S. Senate refused to consider Carlile's bill by a vote of 12-28, his unexplainable about-face ulti-

mately cost him his political career. Labeled as a traitor, Gov. Francis Pierpont and others demanded his resignation. Some sought to have him impeached, yet Carlile continued to serve in the U.S. Senate until March 3, 1865.

In 1869, he ran for state delegate representing Harrison County, but lost. He died in Clarksburg on Oct. 24, 1878.

This sesquicentennial moment is brought to you by the West Virginia Sesquicentennial Commission and the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, Archives and History Section.

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