

## **Working Families Mourn the Loss of Our Greatest Advocate in the US Senate**

(partially excerpted from [blog.aflcio.org](http://blog.aflcio.org))

The death of Senator Edward Kennedy leaves a void in the lives of working families that will be hard to replace. We had no better friend, no stronger supporter, no more forceful voice for the concerns of every American. Kennedy fought throughout his life to improve the lives of working people—it was his sole purpose, the goal that guided every piece of legislation he authored and candidate that he supported. He championed civil rights for people of color, better education for all children, immigration reform, women's rights, workers' rights, the freedom to choose a union and health care reform.

Senator Kennedy wasn't just a co-sponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act. He was vital in its creation and the first to introduce it in the Senate.

In 1966 he introduced his first health care bill. That legislation secured funding for 30 community clinics in poor neighborhoods. That number later grew to several hundred. He called health care reform the "cause of my life" and it was continually one of his top priorities throughout his 40 years in the Senate.

Passion for justice fueled his time in the Senate. Perhaps his earliest important battle when he took office was against the poll tax, which he despised. Although he had little power and less seniority, he tried to eliminate it with an amendment to the 1965 Voting Rights Act when better established liberals were stepping aside.

In a magnificent career, Kennedy achieved considerably more than did most presidents, and he proved to be one of the finest friends in public life American working women and men have ever had.

He understood us and why we are so important to the well-being of our nation. As Kennedy stated in 2005:

"We stand together in our founding purpose to improve the lives of workers and their families and to achieve social and economic justice. And we will emerge from these times bigger and stronger than before, better prepared to take on the challenges, the global economy, and guarantee that America's workers are always put first."

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney says Kennedy, "personified a sense of aspiration that has become America's aspiration—to make things better, to make them more fair, to make our nation more compassionate and hopeful, to make life work for working men and women."

Senator Kennedy never ceased in his dedication to working families. His list of legislative achievements is too long to list, but truth be told, we are all better off today because of his tireless efforts on our behalf.

The words Senator Kennedy used to eulogize his brother Bobby are perfectly fitting to describe him as well, "...my brother need not be idealized, or enlarged in death beyond what he was in life, to be remembered simply as a good and decent man,

who saw wrong and tried to right it, saw suffering and tried to heal it, saw war and tried to stop it..."

To paraphrase a famous Ted Kennedy line:

Senator Kennedy, you gave us hope that still lives on and your dream of social and economic justice shall never die.