



Written by on August 26, 2009

Ted Kennedy Dies at 77

Succumbing to an inoperable brain tumor discovered 15 months ago, Senator Edward Moore Kennedy passed away at his home in Hyannisport, Massachusetts, on August 25th. The youngest of nine children of Joseph and Rose Kennedy, he is survived by his second wife, Victoria, and children Kara, Edward Jr., and Patrick (a Rhode Island Congressman).

Elected to the Senate in 1962, his 47 years in office made him the third-longest serving senator in the nation's history, junior in that regard only to still-serving West Virginia Robert Byrd and the late Strom Thurmond of South Carolina. In addition, Senator Byrd and Michigan Representative John Dingell are the only members of the entire current Congress who were serving when Kennedy first took his Senate seat on November 7, 1962.



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After his brother John won the presidency, Ted Kennedy was too young at 28 to meet the Constitution's requirement that a senator must be 30 years of age. At the request of the Kennedy family, Massachusetts Democratic Governor Foster Furcolo agreed to appoint family friend Benjamin Smith as an interim office holder with the stipulation that the Gloucester mayor would step aside when the youthful Kennedy became eligible. As soon as Ted reached age 30, he announced his candidacy. Opposed in a 1962 primary by Massachusetts Attorney General Edward McCormack, Kennedy, who had never run for political office, had no defense when McCormack pointed a finger at him in a televised debate and angrily insisted, "The office of a United States senator should be merited, not inherited." Continuing, McCormack protested that if his opponent's name had merely been Edward Moore rather than Edward Moore Kennedy, his candidacy "would be a joke." But Kennedy prevailed in both the primary and the fall election and entered the office immediately. He won reelection seven times.

Kennedy campaigned during his original run for the office with the slogan, "He can do more for Massachusetts," an obvious reference to having one brother in the White House and another brother, Robert, serving as Attorney General. It has always been a belief of all in the Kennedy family that government existed more to provide for the people's wants than to protect their God-given rights. His liberal view of government could always be counted on to support the federal government's intrusions into every conceivable area. An early backer of expanded immigration, he played a major role in passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 and continued through the decades to support measures that spawned the immigration explosion of recent years. He helped to enact expanded federal involvement in medicine, education, gun rights, housing, and numerous other arenas.



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A key Kennedy victory transpired when he opposed the nomination by President Reagan of Judge Robert Bork for a place on the Supreme Court. The Catholic Kennedy surprised even some of his staunchest supporters in heavily Catholic Massachusetts and elsewhere by stridently opposing the choice because "Robert Bork's America is a land in which women would be forced into back-alley abortions [and where] children could not be taught about evolution." These were issues of concern to most Catholics who, like many other Americans, were more concerned about abortion's millions of victims and the dubious claims of evolutionists. But the Kennedy view prevailed and Bork was rejected. Kennedy later failed in his attempt to keep Clarence Thomas from the high court, focusing again on his long-held desire to preserve the legacy of *Roe v Wade*.

With a lifetime rating of 90 percent awarded by the Americans for Democratic Action, Kennedy's high place among the nation's leftists could hardly be denied. The 100 percent awarded him by both NARAL Pro-Choice and Planned Parenthood stood in sharp contrast to the near-zero rating consistently given him by the National Right to Life Committee. In its "Freedom Index" based on adherence to the U.S. Constitution, *The New American* magazine regularly reported that Kennedy's votes earned him a ranking as one of the most liberal members of Congress. The non-partisan *Almanac of American Politics* examined Kennedy's record during the 2005-2006 congressional session and rated it as 91 percent liberal in economic matters, 89 percent liberal regarding social issues, and 96 percent liberal in the foreign policy arena.

Kennedy's own possible run for the presidency became derailed after a 1969 incident on Massachusetts' Chappaquiddick Island led to the death of 29-year-old Mary Jo Kopechne. The senator had hosted a party for several of slain brother Bobby's campaign workers and, late during that fateful night, he drove the auto that plunged off a bridge with the girl aboard. He got out but she did not. The senator later pleaded guilty to the minor charge of leaving the scene of an accident and received a suspended sentence, but doubts about his account of the tragedy persisted and continued to hound him for many years. In 1980, he failed to unseat incumbent Jimmy Carter in that year's Democratic primaries and soon vowed never again to seek the nation's highest office.

Personal tragedies seemed always to plague the entire Kennedy family. Assassinations of his two older brothers had been preceded by the war-time death of the eldest of the Kennedy sons, Joseph Jr., during World War II. In 1964, shortly after becoming a senator, he almost died when the small plane in which he was a passenger crashed in a Massachusetts field. Two aboard perished and Kennedy suffered a back injury that never ceased troubling him. His 1958 marriage to Joan Bennett fell on rocky ground during the 1960s and they divorced in 1981. In 1973, son Edward Jr. suffered the amputation of a cancerous leg. Frequent charges that alcohol was dominating the senator's life during the 1980s resulted in a diminished influence in the Senate. In 1991, Kennedy was embarrassed when forced to testify at the trial of nephew William Kennedy Smith who had been accused of rape after a drinking party the senator hosted at the family's Palm Beach estate. His marriage in 1992 to Louisiana native Victoria Reggie brought some stability to his life.

With the passing of the man known as their "liberal lion," Senate Democrats have lost, at least temporarily, the 60-vote veto-proof margin they have enjoyed. Massachusetts law calls for a replacement election to be held within five months of the vacancy. Unless the heavily Democratic Massachusetts state legislature again alters its law regarding succession (it did so in 2004 to keep a Republican governor from possibly appointing a successor to Senator John Kerry), one certain vote for the Obama healthcare proposal won't be there. Look for the administration to claim that the nation



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should honor the deceased Massachusetts liberal by enacting one of his most cherished causes, a takeover of America's healthcare system by the federal government.

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