



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on August 24, 2009

Ted Kennedy's Rank Partisanship

Massachusetts' senior Senator Ted Kennedy has reversed an earlier stance with his recent appeal to change Massachusetts' rules of Senate succession once again.

When a Republican was governor of Massachusetts, Kennedy worked to get rid of the rules that allowed the governor to appoint a senator in the event of a vacancy. Now that the governor is a Democrat, Kennedy wants to restore those rules. Kennedy is currently battling brain cancer, and most political observers have speculated he will not be serving much longer in the U.S. Senate.



"I am now writing to you about an issue that concerns me deeply - the continuity of representation for Massachusetts should a Senate vacancy occur," Kennedy [wrote](#) to Massachusetts state Democratic leaders recently (though the letter was dated July 2), "I therefore am writing to urge you to work together to amend the law through the normal legislative process to provide for a temporary gubernatorial appointment until the special election occurs."

But Kennedy's concern for "continuity" of Massachusetts representation in the U.S. Senate is new-found, as he has missed 97 percent of the Senate roll call votes this year because of his health.

Massachusetts Republicans and other observers have termed the letter a specimen of rank partisanship, as Kennedy spearheaded a legislative effort five years ago to eliminate the possibility of then-governor Mitt Romney, a Republican, from appointing a successor to Senator John Kerry if he won the presidential election against George W. Bush. Now that the Massachusetts governorship is in the hands of liberal Democrat Deval Patrick, Kennedy is spearheading a drive to restore the governor's power to appoint a successor.

Even the liberal *Boston Globe* has reported that Kennedy was instrumental in getting the original bill to strip the governor of the power to appoint a senatorial successor passed. The *Boston Globe* [reported](#) on June 11, 2004:

Prodded by a personal appeal from Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democratic legislative leaders have agreed to take up a stalled bill creating a special election process to replace US Senator John F. Kerry if he wins the presidency....

National Democrats want the change to prevent Governor Mitt Romney from filling Kerry's seat with a Republican, but the bill had been stalled as [Massachusetts House Speaker Thomas] Finneran and [Massachusetts State Senate President Robert] Travaglini weighed whether to take it up....

But Kennedy made a direct appeal to Travaglini, first at a fund-raiser last week in Boston for the senator and then with a phone call to his home over the weekend, according to Democratic officials. Kennedy argued that the control of the closely divided US Senate could be decided by



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the outcome of a Massachusetts election to replace Kerry.

Boston radio talk-show host and *Boston Herald* columnist Howie Carr summarized Kennedy's position: "He's asking the legislature, which embarrassed itself by changing the law in the first place, to now doubly embarrass itself by changing the law back," Carr [said](#) on his talk show on August 21, sarcastically suggesting that the Democrat-dominated legislature would be more honest if they would "just write a law that says that only Democratic governors get to appoint successors in the Senate, and when there is a Republican governor there will be a special election."

Photo of Ted Kennedy: AP Images



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