



For Immediate Release

**The American Immigration Law Foundation Mourns the Loss
of Senator Edward M. Kennedy**

August 26, 2009

Washington D.C. - Today, America and the immigrant-rights community have lost one of their greatest champions. Senator Edward M. Kennedy's life-long commitment to civil rights extended from African Americans to the disabled to the millions of immigrants and refugees who come to our nation in search of a better life. In 2007, Senator Kennedy said "From Jamestown, to the Pilgrims, to the Irish, to today's workers, people have come to this country in search of opportunity. They have sought nothing more than a chance to work hard and bring a better life to themselves and their families. They come to our country with their hearts and minds full of hope."

Senator Kennedy was the driving force behind every significant piece of immigration legislation over the past 40-plus years. Most recently, Senator Kennedy co-authored a comprehensive immigration reform bill which failed to pass in 2007. Upon its defeat Senator Kennedy said, "Immigration reform is an opportunity to be true to our ideals as a nation. Our Declaration of Independence announces that all of us are created equal. Today, we failed to live up to that declaration for millions of men and women who live, work, and worship beside us. But our ideals are too strong to be held back for long."

"Senator Kennedy was a stalwart supporter of immigrants' rights. He understood our nation's responsibility to newcomers and spent his career fighting for better and more equitable treatment of all people," said Ben Johnson, Executive Director of the American Immigration Law Foundation. "As our work on immigration reform continues, Senator Kennedy's absence will be felt, but his commitment will never be forgotten."

"For immigration advocates, Senator Kennedy was a friend, visionary, and supreme strategist," said Mary Giovagnoli, Director of the Immigration Policy Center and a former Kennedy staffer. "He was the architect of the Refugee Act of 1980, fought back the worst excesses of the harsh 1996 immigration act, and most importantly, forged a plan for comprehensive immigration reform that continues to be the model for today's legislation."

The Senator's words resonate as the fight for fair and equitable treatment of America's immigrants continues. "We are in this struggle for the long haul...as we continue the battle, we will have ample inspiration in the lives of the immigrants all around us...we will begin anew to build the kinds of tough, fair, and practical reform worthy of our shared history as immigrants and as Americans."

- For more on Senator Kennedy's legacy, read our blog: [Leader, Visionary and Friend: Today We Remember Senator Edward M. Kennedy](#)

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