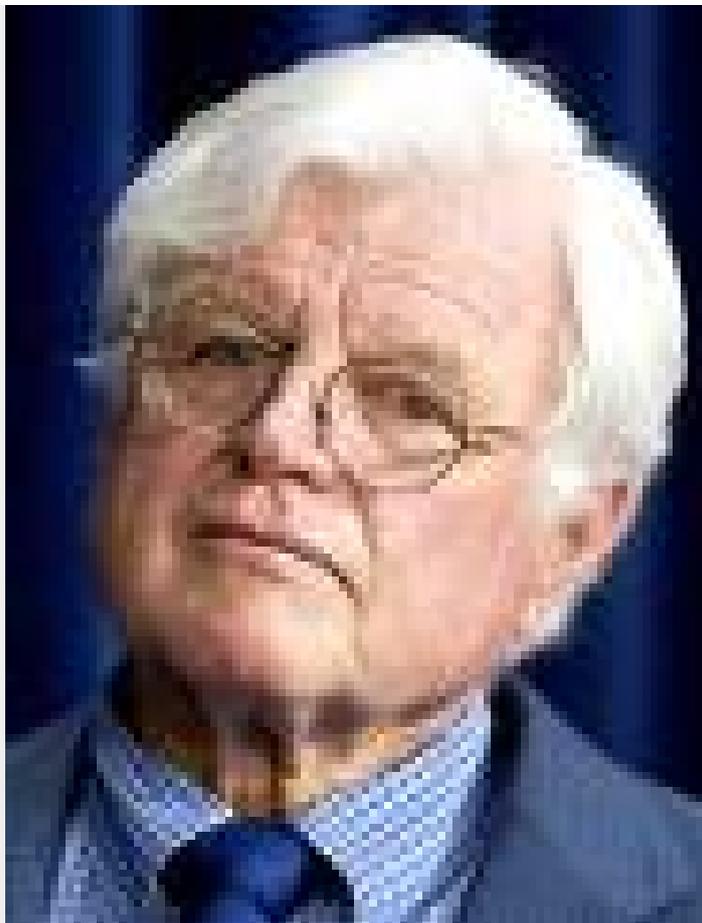


THE VOICE OF AMERICAN LIBERALISM

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Category: [Opinions](#)



By Bob Hepburn, [The Toronto Star](#), 27 August 2009

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Like many Canadians, I had long regarded Kennedy, who died yesterday at 77, as a liberal icon.

He was the last senior member of a family dynasty that had shaped much of the progressive social policies that made America a beacon in the 1960s for liberals around the world, and which had given rise in Canada to a new generation of politicians who championed similar hopes and dreams here.

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But when I arrived in Washington in the late 1980s, the American media were more titillated with Kennedy's antics involving waitresses, congressional pages and copious bottles of wine than with his efforts to give 37 million Americans without any health insurance some relief from possible bankruptcy if they became hospitalized.

At that time, Kennedy was so out of control that even his fellow liberals were turning their backs on him.

Over the years, though, Kennedy managed slowly to turn his life around and eventually earned well-deserved respect as one of the best senators in Washington.

It was a pity, however, that Kennedy's personal flaws for so long overshadowed his achievements, especially in the areas of health care, education and civil rights.

In his 46 years in the Senate, he authored more than 2,500 pieces of legislation, from expanding health care to increasing the minimum wage, revamping immigration laws and championing equal opportunity regardless of race, gender or disability. He was also a leader in fighting for human rights in South Africa and Chile.

It was a record of liberalism of which Kennedy could be justifiably proud.

For Canadians, Kennedy is best known for championing a universal, Canadian-style health insurance plan for Americans. Kennedy studied our medicare system closely, liked what he saw, and tried for years to introduce a similar program in the U.S.

Each time, though, he failed.

Now, pressure to revive his dream of a national health-care plan is rising because so many Americans are without any insurance and because of the soaring costs of private health insurance premiums.

Even as he lay dying last week at his Cape Cod home, Kennedy was still fighting for a universal health-care system, much to the dismay of his vocal critics.

Indeed, some mean-spirited bloggers were asking on the Internet just two days ago why, if Kennedy was so in love with our medicare system, he wasn't getting treatment in Canada for his brain cancer.

Those bloggers are among the millions of Kennedy critics who will remember him not for his considerable accomplishments, but for his liberalism, his monumental failures and personal tragedies.

His detractors, including some liberals, will always cite his expulsion from Harvard for cheating, his boozing and womanizing and his bitter divorce from his first wife.

And they will never forgive him for Chappaquiddick.

That was the fatal 1969 incident in which Mary Jo Kopechne died when the car Kennedy was driving fell off a bridge on Chappaquiddick Island in Massachusetts. Kennedy left the scene of the accident and didn't report it for eight hours.

Although he never fulfilled his dream of following in his brother John's footsteps and becoming president of the U.S., Kennedy came to be admired and respected by Republicans, as well as Democrats, for his ability to work with politicians of all backgrounds.

That talent was especially needed as the U.S. drifted over the last 30 years away from the Kennedy-era liberalism of the 1960s and toward the hard-nosed conservatism espoused by Ronald Reagan and most recently by former president George W. Bush.

Indeed, Canadian liberals could take a lesson from Kennedy in how to work with conservatives, especially when it comes to dealing with Stephen Harper and his tough love attitude toward social programs aimed at helping the poor and disadvantaged.

Kennedy, using his considerable charm and intellect, was able to form alliances with his most unlikely opponents, including Bush, with whom he worked closely to pass No Child Left Behind, legislation that mandated testing to measure student progress in classrooms across America.

Ultimately, Ted Kennedy was a tremendously flawed individual, but he was the voice of American

liberalism during a time when that was a very lonely task.

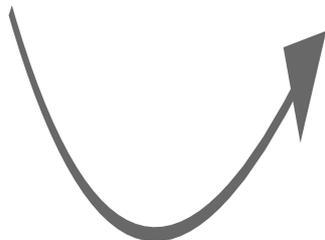
He will be sorely missed by Americans, Canadians and the world.

Bob Hepburn's column appears Thursdays. bhepburn@thestar.ca

Armenians Mourn Passing of Armenian Issues Stalwart Senator Ted Kennedy

Press Release by [ANCA](#), 26 August 2009

WATERTOWN, MA – The Armenian National Committee of Massachusetts joined with citizens of the Commonwealth and Armenian Americans across the U.S. in mourning the passing of Senate icon and lifelong advocate of Armenian issues, Senator Ted Kennedy.



"Since his election in 1962, Senator Kennedy has been a fighter for Armenian Genocide recognition, supporter of an independent and prosperous Armenia and a defender of the right to self-determination of the people of Nagorno Karabagh," said ANC of Massachusetts Co-Chair Dikran Kaligian. "We join with ANCA leaders on the national, regional and local levels and our community in Massachusetts in honoring the life and legacy of Sen. Kennedy and extend our deepest condolences to the Kennedy family."

Congressional Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide

Sen. Kennedy's support for passage of Armenian Genocide legislation has been consistent, emphatic and vocal. As a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1989, Sen. Kennedy joined with then Committee Chairman, now Vice-President Joe Biden and former Illinois Senator Paul Simon in leading the fight for Committee passage of a resolution which would mark April 24, 1990, as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. Over the pronounced objections of the U.S. State Department and the Turkish Government, the Committee adopted S.J. 212 with a vote of 8 to 6.

Subsequently, Senator Kennedy has cosponsored successive Armenian Genocide resolutions introduced in the Senate and cosigned letters to President Bush urging him to properly characterize this crime against humanity. He has spoken on the Senate floor numerous times commemorating the Armenian Genocide, and in 1999, joined with Armenian Americans across the U.S. at the annual ANCA Capitol Hill Observance of the Armenian Genocide. "As my son and I were talking just a few moments ago, he reminded me that if people here in the United States had paid attention to the Genocide in the early part of this century, we would not have had, perhaps, the tragedies in World War II and, if we had paid attention to that tragedy, we might not have the tragedies that we have in Kosovo," remarked Sen. Kennedy at the April 21, 1999 event.

Locally, in April 2000, Sen. Kennedy delivered the keynote address at the historic Trinity Church in Boston as part of the community's commemoration of the 85th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

In June, 2006, following the State Department firing of U.S. Ambassador to Armenia John Evans for his recognition of the Armenian Genocide, Sen. Kennedy joined with fellow Commonwealth Senator John Kerry in calling on Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to explain the State Department's actions. "We believe, and the reports from our diplomats at that time, make clear that genocide accurately described these events. Henry Morgenthau, then our Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, described these actions as a "campaign of race extermination," noted Senators Kennedy and Kerry in a June 5th letter to Secretary Rice. They went on to ask for "clarification as soon as possible about Ambassador Evans' premature dismissal after 35 years of exemplary service to the United States Government."

Staunch Supporter of Armenia and Self-Determination for Nagorno Karabagh

From the early days of Nagorno Karabagh's calls for self-determination, Sen. Kennedy was outspoken in his support for legislation condemning Azerbaijani violence against the Armenian communities in Sumgait and Baku, Azerbaijan and Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act provisions to block U.S. assistance to Azerbaijan until that country ends its aggression and lifts its illegal blockades of Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh.

In a May 17, 1991, statement on the Senate floor, Sen. Kennedy condemned the latest round of Azerbaijani violence against Armenian civilians, noting that "Since 1988, the world has witnessed anti-Armenian pogroms in Azerbaijan during which hundreds of Armenians have been killed and over 300,000 have been forced to flee that area and seek refuge in Armenia and Russia. These latest attacks have brought new tragedy and suffering to the Armenian people." He continued to note that "America has always stood for human rights and human dignity--for our citizens and for all peoples throughout the world. We must not now ignore the plight of the long-suffering Armenian people." Sen. Kennedy joined with colleagues Carl Levin (D-MI) and Bob Dole (R-KS) in support of S.Res.128 which condemned the "indiscriminate use of force, including the shelling of civilian areas, on Armenia's eastern and southern borders" and called for "the end to the blockades and other uses of force and intimidation directed against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, and calls for the withdrawal of Soviet forces newly deployed for the purpose of intimidation"

In 1999, Sen. Kennedy spoke passionately in support for maintaining Section 907 of the Freedom Support act, as opponents attempted to strike the measure during a day long debate and successful vote led by Senators Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Spencer Abraham (R-MI), Paul Sarbanes (D-MD), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Jack Reed (RI) and the Massachusetts Senator.

Sen. Kennedy also joined Senator Dole in spearheading the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act in 1994, which would cut aid to countries which block the passage of humanitarian assistance to other

countries in need. While referencing no country specifically, the bill was inspired by Turkey's blockade of Armenia, instituted in 1993 and continuing to this day.

Senator Kennedy lost a valiant battle to brain cancer on August 26th at the age of 77. He will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

