

President Obama spoke this morning from Martha's Vineyard on the passing of Senator Ted Kennedy:

I wanted to say a few words this morning about the passing of an extraordinary leader, Senator Edward Kennedy.

Over the past several years, I've had the honor to call Teddy a colleague, a counselor, and a friend. And even though we have known this day was coming for some time now, we awaited it with no small amount of dread.

Since Teddy's diagnosis last year, we've seen the courage with which he battled his illness. And while these months have no doubt been difficult for him, they've also let him hear from people in every corner of our nation and from around the world just how much he meant to all of us. His fight has given us the opportunity we were denied when his brothers John and Robert were taken from us: the blessing of time to say thank you -- and goodbye.

The outpouring of love, gratitude, and fond memories to which we've all borne witness is a testament to the way this singular figure in American history touched so many lives. His ideas and ideals are stamped on scores of laws and reflected in millions of lives -- in seniors who know new dignity, in families that know new opportunity, in children who know education's promise, and in all who can pursue their dream in an America that is more equal and more just -- including myself.

The Kennedy name is synonymous with the Democratic Party. And at times, Ted was the target of partisan campaign attacks. But in the United States Senate, I can think of no one who engendered greater respect or affection from members of both sides of the aisle. His seriousness of purpose was perpetually matched by humility, warmth, and good cheer. He could passionately battle others and do so peerlessly on the Senate floor for the causes that he held dear, and yet still maintain warm friendships across party lines.

And that's one reason he became not only one of the greatest senators of our time, but one of the most accomplished Americans ever to serve our democracy.

His extraordinary life on this earth has come to an end. And the extraordinary good that he did lives on. For his family, he was a guardian. For America, he was the defender of a dream.

I spoke earlier this morning to Senator Kennedy's beloved wife, Vicki, who was to the end such a wonderful source of encouragement and strength. Our thoughts and prayers are with her, his children Kara, Edward, and Patrick; his stepchildren Curran and Caroline; the entire Kennedy family; decades' worth of his staff; the people of Massachusetts; and all Americans who, like us, loved Ted Kennedy.

Statement from the President on the Death of Senator Ted Kennedy

"Michelle and I were heartbroken to learn this morning of the death of our dear friend, Senator Ted Kennedy.

For five decades, virtually every major piece of legislation to advance the civil rights, health and economic well being of the American people bore his name and resulted from his efforts.

I valued his wise counsel in the Senate, where, regardless of the swirl of events, he always had time for a new colleague. I cherished his confidence and momentous support in my race for the Presidency. And even as he waged a valiant struggle with a mortal illness, I've profited as President from his encouragement and wisdom.

An important chapter in our history has come to an end. Our country has lost a great leader, who picked up the torch of his fallen brothers and became the greatest United States Senator of our time.

And the Kennedy family has lost their patriarch, a tower of strength and support through good times and bad.

Our hearts and prayers go out to them today--to his wonderful wife, Vicki, his children Ted Jr., Patrick and Kara, his grandchildren and his extended family."

-- President Barack Obama