

📖 Topic Page: [Kennedy, Edward M. \(Edward Moore\), 1932–2009](#)

Definition: **Kennedy** from *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate(R) Dictionary*

Ted Kennedy 1932–2009 *Edward Moore Kennedy, bro. of J.F. & R.F. Am. polit.*

Summary Article: **Kennedy, Edward M.**

From *Congress A to Z*

With nearly forty-seven years in the Senate, Edward M. Kennedy (1932–2009) was the fourth-longest-serving senator. He was one of the nation's leading liberals, and his defense of old Democratic values helped score some big legislative victories even while his party was in the minority. The earnestness of his support for labor protections and a social safety net won the Massachusetts Democrat grudging respect even from colleagues who differed with him on the issues.

Although the Reagan-era caricature of Kennedy as a big government liberal stuck, he consistently was able to form alliances with Republican senators to advance legislation. From his position as the ranking minority member of the Labor and Human Resources Committee, Kennedy joined with committee chair Nancy Landon Kassebaum, R-Kan., to push through a bill in the 104th Congress (1995–1997) that mandated health insurance portability, guaranteeing that individuals who lose or leave their jobs can keep their coverage. In 1997 Kennedy joined with Orrin G. Hatch, R-Utah, to pass legislation that created a program to help uninsured children receive health coverage. Kennedy also won accolades from Republicans for teaming up with President George W. Bush in 2001 to pass comprehensive education legislation, known as the No Child Left Behind bill.



Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., announces legislation that would allow the FDA to regulate tobacco products in 2006. He is flanked by bill cosponsors Sen. Mike DeWine, R-Ohio (left), and Rep. Thomas M. Davis III, R-Va.

Yet Kennedy's legislative acuity did not always seem to carry over into his personal life. His image was shattered in 1969 when he drove his car off a bridge in Chappaquiddick, Massachusetts, and his companion, Mary Jo Kopechne, drowned.

Kennedy had been elected majority whip earlier in 1969, beating Finance chair Russell B. Long of Louisiana. But after Chappaquiddick, Kennedy's leadership fortunes fell, and when Senate Democrats elected their leaders in 1971, they chose Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia for whip, 31–24.

Despite his personal troubles, many Democrats looked to Kennedy to follow his brothers' aspirations

and run for president. In 1980 he challenged President Jimmy Carter for his party's nomination but was unsuccessful. His stirring Democratic convention speech, however, with its liberal affirmation that “the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die,” helped restore some of Kennedy's lost luster.

Kennedy was first elected to the Senate in 1962 to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of his brother, John F. Kennedy, in 1960. Edward Kennedy chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee from 1979 to 1981, Labor and Human Resources Committee from 1987 to 1995, and Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee from mid-2001 to 2003. His son, Patrick, represented Rhode Island in the House from 1995 to 2011.

In 2007 Kennedy was back in the chair of the HELP committee, as it was known, as a result of Democrats reclaiming control of the Senate in the 2006 elections. In that role he would revisit the 2001 education legislation, which was up for renewal. The reauthorization effort was difficult because educators and state officials had become increasingly critical of the law's testing and teacher-quality mandates.

Kennedy also focused on another of his favorite topics: the cost and availability of health care in the United States. In 2007 Kennedy teamed with Hatch again to reauthorize and expand the popular State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) that they created in 1997. While the program was reauthorized that year, its \$35 billion expansion to cover an additional 3 to 4 million uninsured children fell to two George W. Bush vetoes in October and December. Kennedy was diagnosed with a brain tumor in 2008 and died just over a year later. At his funeral, President Barack Obama called him “the greatest legislator of our time.” Seven months later, Congress passed and Obama signed into law the patient protection and affordable care act, which proponents said reflected the late senator's priorities.

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