

just the United States Senate's role in our Government, but their role in it as well.

Today, the Senate is engaged in another important battle on one of the great causes of our time, the cause of Ted Kennedy's life, the battle to make health care not a privilege for some, but a right for all. He has been so sorely missed in this debate, especially now that we're closer than we've ever been to passing real health reform. But even though we took a critical step forward this week, we've got more work to do. And I hope and believe that we will continue to engage each other with the spirit of civility and seriousness that has brought us this far, a spirit that I think Teddy would have liked to see.

More than a half a century ago, a Senate committee was set up to choose the five greatest Senators of all time. No, it wasn't an exercise in the Senate's own vanity; it was because there were five empty spaces designated for portraits in the Senate Reception Room.

"There are no standard tests to apply to a Senator," the chairman of that committee wrote. "No Dun & Bradstreet rating, no scouting reports. His talents may vary with his time; his contribution may be limited by his politics. To judge his own true greatness, particularly in comparison with his fellow senators long after they are dead, is nearly an impossible task."

When John F. Kennedy wrote those words, I doubt that he imagined his 25-year-old brother would one day stand as indisputably one of the finest Senators of this or any age. But here's the thing: Teddy didn't earn that distinction just because he served in the United States Senate for nearly 1 out of every 5 days of its existence. He earned it because each of those days was full

and passionate and productive and advanced the life of this Nation in a way that few Americans ever have. And he did it all by bridging the partisan divide again and again in an era when—that someday may be recalled as one where bipartisanship was too rare an achievement.

There will never be another like Ted Kennedy. But there will be other great Senators who follow in his footsteps. That's not an insult to his legacy; it is, rather, the legacy he sought to leave, both with this institute and with his example.

"Being a Senator changes a person," he wrote in his memoirs. "Something fundamental and profound happens to you when you arrive there, and it stays with you all the time that you are privileged to serve. I have seen the changes in people who have come into the Senate. It may take a year, or 2 years, or 3 years, but it always happens; it fills you with a heightened sense of purpose."

In all our debates, through all our tests, over all the years that are left to come, may we all be blessed with a sense of purpose like Edward M. Kennedy's. Thank you, Vicki. Thanks to all of you. Thanks for making this such a success. God bless you; God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:21 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Patrick J. Kennedy and Edward M. Kennedy, Jr., sons, Kara Kennedy Allen, daughter, and Victoria R. Kennedy, wife, of former Sen. Kennedy. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 15.

Remarks at Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School in New Orleans, Louisiana *October 15, 2009*

The President. What's going on, King? How's everybody doing? Well, what a warm greeting; I appreciate that, guys. Thank you so much.

It is great to see you. I just want you to know that I am so appreciative that your school has been such a good host during my visit. I had a chance to meet some of the students, your fel-

low students in there, and they told me all about what you guys are doing at the school.

And you know, I'm especially glad to come back here because I remember 4 years ago, right after the storm, a lot of people here felt forgotten. But because everybody worked hard, everybody kept hopeful, everybody was

determined to rebuild, you now see just a school that is doing much better than it was ever doing before the storm. So to all the parents and the community leaders who have helped rebuild, we are so grateful to you.

But my main message is for the students here. So I want everybody just for a second, listen up, real quiet. I think some of you know a little bit about me. You know, when I was growing up I didn't have my father at home; he had left us. We weren't rich. We didn't have a lot. But the one thing that my mother and my grandparents told me was that if I worked hard in school, if I loved to read and I loved math and I loved science and I studied hard, there wasn't anything that I couldn't do.

Now, just from meeting the young people here today I can tell that there're so many bright, smart, promising students here. But, you know, there are a lot of distractions out there. A lot of you think, "Well, you know, I don't want to study; I'm just going to play basketball." Or, "I don't want to study; I'm going to be a rap star."

I want all of you to know that the most important thing you can do for yourselves and for your community and for your country is to work hard in school and to treat each other with respect and treat yourself with respect,

because I'm confident that if you all work very hard, then there's no reason why you can't be a doctor or a lawyer. There's no reason why you can't be the Secretary of Education or a principal of a school. There's no reason why you can't be a Congressman or a Senator. Maybe you can be the President of the United States. All right?

So I just got a promise in there—I want a promise from every single one of you that you guys are going to work hard in school each and every day. Give me that promise. You promise?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. You give me a pinkie promise?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Pinkie promise. All right, you know, that's a big promise there. So I'm counting on you guys. I'm going to come back and check on you guys to make sure you've all been working hard. All right? Okay.

And I also just want you to know that Michelle and Malia and Sasha and our dog Bo—everybody says hello, and everybody wishes you well. All right, thank you, guys. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:31 p.m.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in New Orleans

October 15, 2009

The President. Hello, New Orleans! Back in the Big Easy—it's good to see you all. Thank you. Thank you for the warm welcome. Please, everybody have a seat who can have a seat here. If you don't have a seat, then make yourself comfortable.

It is so good to see all of you. I've got a couple of—[*applause*—]thank you. I've got some special folks who are with us here today, so I just want to make sure that I announce them all. First of all, I want to thank Chancellor Tim Ryan and all of the staff here at the University of New Orleans for their outstanding work. I want to thank the Governor of the great State of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal, who is here.

[*At this point, some audience members began to applaud while others began to boo.*]

The President. No, no, I like—Bobby is doing a good job.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Hey, hey. Hold on a second. Bobby, if it makes—hold on. Bobby, first of all, if it makes you feel any better, I get that all the time. [*Laughter*] And the second point is that even though we have our differences politically, one thing I will say is this person is working hard on behalf of the State, and you've got to give people credit for working hard. He's a hard-working man.