

THE HUMANITY OF TED KENNEDY

*Caroline Kennedy**

Good afternoon. I've heard a lot about NYU Law School from John so I'm happy to be here today and find out it's all true. On behalf of the members of my family, particularly Teddy, who's here today, I want to thank the Dean and faculty and the *Journal of Legislation and Public Policy* for paying tribute to my uncle's legislative legacy.

Others will talk about Teddy's mastery of the Senate, his far-sighted chairmanship of the Judiciary and HELP Committees, and the major legislation that would not have been passed but for his passion, commitment, and perseverance: the ADA, minimum wage, criminal justice code overhaul, immigration, changing the voting age to eighteen, and every major piece of civil and voting rights legislation over the past fifty years. It's still hard to fully comprehend how directly Teddy's work impacted the lives of every American.

I thought I would just say a few words about him as person, because I think that more than almost anyone else I've ever met, Teddy's humanity is what made him such a legislative giant.

Teddy was known to his many nieces and nephews for his big hugs, his big heart, and his come-one-come-all sailing expeditions. When fewer and fewer people wanted to join these death defying excursions, he created the Family History Trip for all generations to visit historic sites together. He brought a historian along to talk to the adults and made sure there was plenty of candy for the little ones; he never wanted anyone to feel left out.

As the youngest of nine children, he often spoke about being at the end of the line, or at the children's table, or feeling forgotten in all the commotion, but I think it helped him develop his special gifts of always looking out for others, of making people laugh, and bringing them together no matter how differently they saw the world.

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He brought these gifts to the office. He saw the law as an instrument of social change, not in the abstract, but in its effect on the everyday lives of those who are left out or left behind and need its help.

I never saw anyone work as hard as Teddy to do their best every single day. He prepared for every speech, even after he had been giving speeches for fifty years. He wrote notes to every single person who came to his hundreds of events. He would burst into song with Nick Littlefield to make sure that everyone had a good time, especially if there was a mariachi band in the room. He called every 9/11 family from Massachusetts and went to every funeral. He never stopped showing up.

I don't know how he did it all, but I know that he would say that it was thanks to the incredibly talented and brilliant people who joined him, many of whom are here today. Over the years he built a team of legal giants, and once someone had been on his staff, they were always part of his extended family. He kept their phone numbers on a little pink card in his pocket, and he would call them at all hours of the day and night. They would do anything for Teddy, and Teddy was a master at finding things for people to do. As an example, I first met Justice Breyer when Teddy volunteered us both to serve on a landscape gardening committee in Cambridge, and, of course, expected regular progress reports; I think it was payback for airline deregulation in the justice's case.

One of the reasons for Teddy's great success was that he took his work incredibly seriously, but never took himself too seriously. I wish he were here today, because it would give him a chance to tell one of his favorite ridiculous stories.

Whenever one of his nieces or nephews went to law school and next saw Teddy, he would listen to us moaning about our first year struggles, and then his face would light up, as he knew he had a story that would make us feel better.

"Have you gotten to Pierson versus Post?" he would ask. Without waiting for an answer, he would launch into an imitation of his own first day in property class. "There was a little fox who lived on the field of farmer A, was chased by farmer B, and shot by farmer C," Teddy would begin, alternating between playing the part of his professor, the farmer, and the fox. Finally he would bellow, "So Mr. Kennedy, to whom does the fox belong??" Of course, Teddy gave the wrong answer and was humiliated by the professor for the rest of the semester.

He would have loved gathering at this illustrious law school to celebrate his legal legacy because—in addition to seeing so many col-

leagues and friends, and talking about how to keep fighting for the causes we all believe in—it would have given him a chance to remind us all how far he came from that first day in law school.

Thank you.

