

Last week, Edward Moore Kennedy lost his battle with brain cancer.

Senator Kennedy served for almost half a century in the United States Senate. He was one of only six senators in U.S. history to serve more than 40 years. He was elected to eight full terms to become the second-most senior senator after West Virginia Senator Robert Byrd.

He served as chairman of the Judiciary and Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions committees and was the ranking Democrat on the Judiciary and Armed Services committees during periods when Republicans were the Senate's majority party.

Whether you are a Republican or a Democrat, Ted Kennedy evoked strong emotions. I think everyone can agree that he was a man of great passion – whether it was fighting for the less fortunate or for universal healthcare.

Senator Kennedy played major roles in passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act and the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act.

Senator Kennedy was known for crossing the political aisle to find common ground with colleagues. Adam Clymer, Senator Kennedy's biographer said, "there was never a piece of legislation that he ever got passed without a major Republican ally."

Whether or not you agreed with his political views, Senator Kennedy was respected for being a man of great passion, a man of great philosophy, and a believer that America's best days are ahead.

As the country's focus begins to turn from Senator Kennedy's life to his legacy, the future of healthcare reform – a longtime legislative goal of the senator's – remains. As you well know, the issue of healthcare reform has been a major part of the debate throughout the country over the last several months.

In our own town hall meetings throughout the First District just a couple of weeks ago, the number one issue of those who attended the meetings was healthcare reform.

In the wake of Senator Kennedy's death, many leaders of the Democratic Party immediately began invoking his name to revive President Obama's attempt to ram universal healthcare

legislation through Congress.

Senator Robert Byrd called for the healthcare bill to bear Senator Kennedy's name, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said, "Ted Kennedy's dream of quality healthcare for all Americans will be made real this year because of his leadership and his inspiration."

Instead of using his death to advance an extreme policy agenda – of more government spending and more bureaucratic control over decisions which should be made by patients and their doctors – I would hope that in honor of Senator Kennedy's legacy the president and the Democratic leaders in Congress will work in a spirit of bipartisanship to lower the temperature of rhetoric in an honest effort to get things done on behalf of the American people.

Senator Kennedy was buried at Arlington National Cemetery on Saturday, just a few feet from the graves of his brothers, President John F. Kennedy and Senator Robert F. Kennedy. He was eligible for burial at Arlington due to his congressional service and his tenure in the Army from 1951 to 1953.

My deepest sympathies go out to his wife, Vickie, and his children Kara, Edward, Patrick, Curran and Caroline. Our thoughts and prayers – and those of the nation – are with them at this difficult time.

Staying Prepared During Hurricane Season:

In just the past few weeks, we have seen tropical depressions and hurricanes form in the Atlantic. These early storms should serve as a reminder for us to continue to be prepared in the event a hurricane strikes south Alabama.

Those of us fortunate enough to call the Alabama Gulf Coast home know all too well how critical hurricane preparedness can be. Each of the six counties of Alabama's First District is at risk of being affected by a hurricane or tropical storm.

We know the effects of a hurricane can be reduced if you and your family plan ahead and know the steps you should take before, during, and after any natural disaster. Remember, you can never be too prepared.

I once again encourage you to prepare a disaster supply kit, containing items such as water (at least one gallon per day per person), food (including non-perishable and canned items), a can opener, blankets and pillows, clothing, first aid with medicines and prescription drugs, toiletries, a flashlight with batteries, battery operated radio, fully charged cell phone with an extra battery, cash, keys, important documents in a waterproof container or waterproof plastic bag, and insurance documents.

For more information regarding hurricane preparedness, you can visit the National Hurricane Center's website, <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/> .

It is also important to plan ahead in the event you are advised to evacuate. Know how you will leave and where you will go.

Become familiar with alternate routes and other means of transportation to get you to where you are heading.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.