



**NATIONAL  
INDIAN  
GAMING  
ASSOCIATION**

Rebuilding  
Communities  
Through Indian  
Self-Reliance

# Media Release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **NIGA CHAIRMAN ISSUES A STATEMENT PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE LEGACY OF SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY**

**WASHINGTON, D.C. – August 26, 2009** – National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) Chairman, Ernie Stevens, Jr., issued the following statement, paying tribute to Sen. Edward Kennedy's legacy of service. Kennedy, 77 died last night after a 15-month battle with brain cancer at his home in Hyannis Port, Mass.

Senator Kennedy was a not only a devoted leader, but a devoted husband, father, grandfather and uncle. Throughout his powerful and significant career, Senator Kennedy was a true advocate for all minorities in the Senate.

Like his brothers, John and Robert, Senator Kennedy was a great champion for Native Americans. President Kennedy broke decisively with the termination era of the 1950's by inviting Tribal leaders to meet with him on the campaign trail and at the White House. President Kennedy laid the foundation for the Indian Self Determination policy.

Senator Robert Kennedy took the war on poverty to the Oglala Sioux tribe, highlighting the plight of our people. Senator Ted Kennedy picked up their mantle, co sponsoring major legislation, assisting Tribal law enforcement and justice systems, working to include us in the political system and speaking out for the First Americans. He helped champion the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act, which is a cornerstone of Tribal Government protection for our disadvantaged youth.

Without a doubt, Sen. Kennedy helped change the lives of countless people throughout Indian country by using his considerable influence in the Senate. He was a great friend; an American legend and Indian country will truly miss his leadership.

And while there will be a significant gap in the Senate, it is inspiring to know that the strength, determination and the heed of call to political service can be found in his son Rep. Patrick Kennedy. Much like his father, and uncles, he has already shown a true determination to work on behalf of Indian country. Today, our thoughts and prayers go out to Patrick, Sen. Kennedy's wife Victoria and all of the Kennedy family during this time of reflection and remembrance.

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**About the National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA)** - The National Indian Gaming Association is a nonprofit trade association comprised of 184 American Indian Nations and other nonvoting associate member. The mission of NIGA is to advance the lives of Indian people – economically, socially and politically. NIGA operates as a clearinghouse and educational legislative and public policy resources for tribes, policymakers and the public on Indian gaming issues and tribal community development. For more information, visit [www.indiangaming.org](http://www.indiangaming.org).