

Senator Ed Markey First Senate Speech As Delivered 9.18.2013

Madam President, today I am here to give my first speech on the floor of the United States Senate.

I do so with deep respect and reverence for the history of this Chamber and for the giants of the Senate who have served before us.

From Massachusetts, our recent roster of Senators reads like a history textbook.

President John F. Kennedy, who inspired a nation. President Kennedy's desk is right here and it is so appropriate that my extraordinary partner from Massachusetts, Senator Warren, occupies it today.

The legendary Ted Kennedy, who had the vision to make health care a right, and not a privilege. Ed Brooke, the first African-American popularly elected to the Senate. Paul Tsongas, a model of independence.

For 28 years, John Kerry was a champion for the people of Massachusetts. Now he is our chief diplomat to the world, his skill already shown in his ability to bring Russia and Syria to the negotiating table.

America is the greatest country on Earth.

My father drove a truck for the Hood milk company. He graduated from the vocational program at Lawrence High School.

My mother was going to be senior class president in high school, but her mother died when she was a junior. She had to abandon her college dreams to stay home to take care of her younger sisters.

That was before the New Deal, before Social Security, before Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In those days, the only social safety net for families was one of the girls had to stay home.

I was the first in my family to go to college.

I drove an ice cream truck to work my way through Boston College as a commuter. I did the same for law school. And I took out federal student loans, like so many millions of American students have to do today.

And thanks to the people of our state, this son of a milkman is now serving the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the United States Senate.

I am a son of Malden. But I am not here to occupy a seat in the Senate.

I serve in the Senate to stand for those families, to speak for those families, to seek change that lifts up those families and their future.

And to everyone I say that will be how I will conduct myself here in the United States Senate.

And so I come here today to discuss my perspective, formed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, guided by its people, practiced in the House of Representatives for more than 36 years, and open to new knowledge, new ideas, and innovative ways to move our country forward.

From its inception, Massachusetts has thrived because it is a wellspring for the advancement of humanity's ideas and ideals.

Nearly 400 years ago, the Pilgrims braved an uncertain passage to Plymouth as religious innovators.

But the Pilgrims would likely not have survived the New World's harsh environment without learning new ways from the native Wampanoag Indians -- the "people of the dawn", as their tribal name translates.

And so our bearings were set early in the Bay State. In a sense, we in Massachusetts are all people of the dawn, looking over the horizon towards a new frontier, striving to forge a better tomorrow.

It is no surprise that when America moved from farms to factories, it began in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts has survived, and it has thrived, because of our tradition of innovation and imagination.

We invent the materials that power our economy. We initiate the moral discussions that advance a nation.

We are never satisfied with what we have accomplished, instead always pushing for progress, embracing the promise of the rising sun.

And we know from experience that when we invest in the future, we create jobs here in our country.

During the last few decades, the pursuit of the possible that is hard-wired into our Massachusetts DNA has helped us weather tough economies and rough international competition better than many other states.

We have become a high-tech, clean-tech, bio-tech hub for America and for the world.

At places like MIT and at companies like Bolt, Beranek and Newman in Boston, the underlying architecture of the Internet was envisioned and set in motion.

Earlier in my career, Congress passed three telecommunications bills on a bipartisan basis that I helped author that removed barriers for innovation and unlocked opportunity for entrepreneurs, creating jobs in Massachusetts and across the nation by unleashing more than \$1 trillion of private sector investment in this emerging technology area.

Now, the future of telecom is mobile. Massachusetts has several hundred mobile companies. We have the strongest robotics centers in the nation. We have a burgeoning digital games industry. We are ready for the next generation of technology jobs, because we spent decades building our digital foundation.

Massachusetts was once the nation's leading power producer, when Melville wrote Moby Dick by the light of a whale oil lamp.

But now, we are at the forefront of the recent energy revolution.

Our electricity is getting cleaner. We're using it smarter. And it's getting cheaper.

Massachusetts is now the #1 state in the country when it comes to energy efficiency. And just yesterday, Boston was named America's most energy efficient city.

Our shores will host the first offshore wind energy farm in the nation. The same winds that brought the Pilgrims to Plymouth Rock will now power a new generation of jobs in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts is seventh in the nation in solar installed per person, even in a state more known for the "Perfect Storm" than for perfect sunny days.

In Massachusetts alone, clean energy now employs 80,000 people across 5,000 businesses.

If we continue our commitments to clean energy, we will put steelworkers and ironworkers and welders and electricians to work building a new backbone for a new energy economy here in the United States and across the world.

Massachusetts is the Mecca for biotech on the entire planet.

We're number 1 in per capita dollars awarded by the National Institutes of Health, supporting 35,000 jobs statewide. Health is our first wealth, but in Massachusetts, it's also one of the best job-creators.

We're an idea factory, pumping out new concepts and creating new companies that produce new jobs and discover cures to deadly diseases.

In Massachusetts, we recognize that education is a ladder of opportunity that allows every child to maximize their God-given abilities.

The first public school in America was established in Massachusetts.

Today, Massachusetts' students are # 1 in the nation in Math, in Reading and tied for #1 with New York in Science.

For students in Massachusetts and around the country, we should never let the big dreams of attending college be thwarted by the small print of overly-burdensome loans.

And as children learn in an online environment, we need to make sure they can grow, develop, and make mistakes that won't derail a promising future.

That's why I will soon introduce my Do Not Track Kids legislation, on a bi-partisan basis to protect children online.

The value of our economy grows because it is imbued with our American values.

What unites us is the unshakeable belief that no matter where you come from, no matter your circumstances, you can achieve the American Dream.

We believe everyone should get a fair shot. No one should be left behind.

It is time to get back to the values that made Massachusetts and this country great.

It is time to make real progress creating an economy that works for everyone;

It is time to protect a woman's right to choose;

It is time to deliver to the LGBT community all of the protections and rights under the Constitution;

And it's time to put real gun control measures on the books.

The horrific mass shooting at the Navy Yard is the latest deadly reminder that we need to do more to stem the tide of gun violence in this country.

Newtown. Aurora. These tragedies are not inevitable. They are preventable. This senseless carnage must end.

We need a ban on assault weapons. We need a ban on high capacity magazines. We need universal background checks combined with comprehensive care for our mentally ill.

We need to put an end to the partisan gridlock that prevents even the most basic of gun control measures from becoming law.

In the next few weeks, we will see our seventh fight over our debt and deficit in the last couple years. We need to break down this rampant ideology that threatens to turn a government that works for the people into a government that simply shuts down.

We must also end the mindless, across-the-board budget cuts from sequestration.

Cutting programs like Head Start will leave a generation of kids lagging behind.

Slashing investments in science means the breakthroughs that create jobs and cure deadly diseases could go undiscovered.

Cutting defense spending mindlessly can undermine our security.

We need a new transportation bill that puts union workers out there working to repair our crumbling roads and bridges.

While many economists have labeled the recent downturn a recession, for our working families and low wage earners, it has been an economic depression.

Economic inequality tears at the fabric that makes our country great. It turns “E Pluribus Unum” into “every one for themselves.”

We must raise the minimum wage for the people who are struggling to make it into the middle class.

We need to create an end to the era of climate denial. Climate change is irrefutable. It is raising sea levels. It is giving storms more power.

The planet is running a fever. There are no emergency rooms for planets. We must put in place the preventative care of unleashing a renewable energy revolution in wind, in solar, in biomass, in geothermal, in energy efficiency that avoids the worst, most catastrophic impacts on climate change on our planet. We are seeing the impacts in our country and all across the planet.

Our moral duty to future generations calls us to address climate change. But it also is an economic opportunity to create new jobs here in our country.

I will soon introduce legislation that will call for America, by 2025, to reach a 25 percent target for clean energy and energy efficiency improvements. This bill will create jobs as it cuts pollution.

And I will continue to work to pass climate legislation, just as I did in the House of Representatives.

I will also introduce legislation to fix our aging natural gas system in Massachusetts and across the country, making it cleaner and more efficient.

We can use affordable natural gas and clean energy, built and delivered through the work of union hands, to power new American manufacturing centers.

That is a job-creation triple play – generate new energy, build new infrastructure, and manufacture new American products.

And we must not massively export our natural gas abroad, or I fear we will continue to export our young men and women to dangerous places all over the world and lose opportunities to lower electricity rates and increase manufacturing jobs here in the United States.

Fifty years ago, President Kennedy announced the ambitious goal of sending an American safely to the Moon.

He told us that we would need a giant rocket made of new metal alloys, some of which had not yet been invented. It would have to be fitted together with a precision better than the finest watch.

And it would have to be returned to Earth safely at speeds never before approximated by humanity. And it would have to be done in fewer than 8 years.

President Kennedy urged us to be bold.

I say to this Chamber, it is time for us to be bold once again.

In this era of innovation, there are jobs that are not yet imagined, in fields that haven't been created, within industries that don't yet exist.

We should be bold.

America watched with pride as Neil Armstrong stepped on the moon and a flag was planted as a symbol of our success. In this Capitol, there is a flag brought back from the moon. It testifies to the returns we receive when we invest in American ingenuity.

When we seek the dawn of discovery;

When we invest in our people and in our industries;

When we follow the universal American values of justice and tolerance and liberty, and equality;

We can then use our talents and our tools to help all people, everywhere build a more peaceful, prosperous future.

I look forward to working with every Senator in the months and years ahead to make the 21st century more educated, more healthy, more prosperous, and more fair than the 20th century was.

That is our challenge, that is our opportunity, and we must do it together.

Thank you. I yield the floor.