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**REMARKS BY SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY ON NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND
COMMISSION REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

(AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY)

It's an honor to be here today as the Commission outlines its recommendations for the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act. The Commission has done impressive work in assessing how the law is working or not working in communities across the nation.

I commend Governor Barnes and Secretary Thompson for their bipartisan leadership. Both have made strengthening public education a priority during their service as governor, and we're all grateful for their continuing dedication to this goal on a national level.

They have assembled a talented group of Commissioners from a broad of array of fields and experiences, and we look forward to their recommendations.

I know that Senator Enzi, Chairman Miller and Congressman McKeon all join me in welcoming your suggestions to improve the Act.

Our goal in the legislation was to chart a better course for the nation's public schools, and to set high standards and close achievement gaps. Its enactment expressed our bipartisan commitment to the principle that every child – black or white, native-born or immigrant, disabled or non-disabled – deserves a realistic opportunity to learn and succeed.

As we know, schools have faced many challenges in implementing the law's reforms, and one of the most serious of these challenges has been the lack of funds. We can't expect to achieve reforms without providing the funds needed to achieve them.

But weakening the law or turning back the clock on its requirements is no solution – especially for the neediest students who stand to gain the most from the reforms.

In reauthorizing the Act this spring, our goal is to develop a strong bipartisan bill that builds on the positive aspects of the law, resolves the concerns about its implementation, and encourages reforms that will be effective in helping students succeed.

We have to reach for new and creative solutions to key issues–

We need to measure progress more effectively, and do more to ensure students reach high standards.

We need to attract and retain good teachers for high need schools.

We need to strengthen state and local roles in improving low-performing schools and providing the technical assistance they need to turn their schools around.

We need to involve parents and local communities more actively in these reforms.

We need to address the dropout crisis in our schools.

And we need to do more to guarantee that high school graduates have the skills to go on to college and compete in the 21st century workforce.

The Commission has constructive recommendations on all of these issues. Some of the Commission's recommendations, such as those related to teacher effectiveness and changes to the accountability provisions, tackle the most difficult issues raised by this law and will require close scrutiny.

But today should mark the beginning of a broad, open, and inclusive discussion. We will listen to experts like the Members of this Commission, as well as students, teachers, parents, and school leaders.

I look forward very much to working with all of you and my colleagues in Congress to build on the law's strengths and remedy its weaknesses.

And ask you to join with me in fighting for more funds in the budget to carry out the Act.

Failure is not an option. Education is the key to our nation's future.

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