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**STATEMENT BY SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY ON HOUSE MINIMUM WAGE
VOTE**

(AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY AT TODAY'S MINIMUM WAGE PRESS CONFERENCE)

I'm honored to be invited to join my friends and colleagues in the House for this special moment. Today's House vote will be a major victory for minimum wage workers. We'll be one giant step closer to winning a decade-long battle – giving 13 million Americans a long-overdue raise, and helping the parents of almost 6 million children put food on the table and pay for the necessities of life.

Today's vote will also be a victory for bipartisanship. Until recently, the minimum wage had never been a partisan issue. The minimum wage has been increased eight times since it was enacted, including three times under Republican Presidents. Today, dozens of House Republicans will cross party lines to support a fair increase. They will put partisan politics aside, and acknowledge the fundamental truth that no one who works for a living should have to live in poverty.

Today's vote will also be a victory for the American people. Americans understand fairness, and they know that today's minimum wage is grossly unfair. But, year after year, Congress has refused to act. So large numbers of the American people took up the challenge themselves. They created a minimum wage movement that has now spread across the nation. Thousands of volunteers organized to support the hard-working neighbors they knew who were struggling to survive on poverty wages. Today's vote is a direct result of this effort, and every citizen who gave their precious time to demand a higher minimum wage should be very proud of what they've accomplished on Capitol Hill today.

But the fight is not over yet. The bill now comes before the Senate, and we will need support from both parties to pass this important bill and send it to the President.

I urge my Republican colleagues in the Senate to do the right thing. Put partisan politics aside. Don't load up the minimum wage bill with poison pills. Don't use procedural tactics to delay it. Listen to the voice of the American people.

Minimum wage workers are men and women of dignity, and they deserve a fair wage that respects the dignity of their work. It's time to do what's right for working families. It's long past time to give minimum wage workers a raise.

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