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**KENNEDY, HARKIN, DINGELL AND PALLONE OPEN DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY BY
HELPING INDIVIDUALS OVERCOME BARRIERS TO INDEPENDENCE**

***New Bipartisan Insurance Program Would Help Those With Severe Functional
Impairments Gain Independence***

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Today, Senators Edward Kennedy and Tom Harkin and Representatives John Dingell and Frank Pallone introduced the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Act of 2007 that would create an insurance program for adults who become functionally disabled.

The measure would provide a cash benefit to help obtain services and supports, while providing those with disabilities more choices on community participation, education, and employment.

Currently there are 10 million Americans in need of long term care services, and the number is expected to increase to near 15 million by 2020. Too often, many individuals are forced to live in poverty just so they can qualify for Medicaid to get the care they need, which is counter to the American way.

Because of its common sense approach to helping Americans take their future into their own hands while saving taxpayer dollars, the CLASS Act has gained the support of over 100 groups representing the disabled, the elderly, and America's workers.

"Too many Americans are perfectly capable of living a life in the community, but are denied the supports they need," said Senator Kennedy. "They languish in needless circumstances with no choice about how or where to obtain these services. Too often, they have to give up the American Dream – the dignity of a job, a home, and a family – so they can qualify for Medicaid, the only program that will support them. The bill we propose is a long overdue effort to offer greater dignity, greater hope, and greater opportunity. It makes a simple pact with all Americans – 'If you work hard and contribute, society will take care of you when you fall on hard times.'"

"The CLASS Act is a cost effective way to ensure individuals maintain freedom of choice throughout every stage of life," said Senator Harkin. "This bill paves the way for more Americans to live independently and with dignity."

"By removing barriers to independence, the CLASS Act will enable more Americans to remain in their communities and empower more individuals to make their own choices." said Congressman Dingell.

"As America continues to age, we are faced with an impending crisis in long term care," Congressman Pallone said. "Today, we offer a new approach that builds upon our existing safety net system and helps our elderly and disabled finance the long term care they need to remain active and productive members of their communities."

The CLASS Act is an important step in the evolution of public policy because it is a framework based on the principles of independence, choice, and empowerment. It is the framework needed to help individuals gain the access they need to live independently. The CLASS Act does this by establishing a national insurance program to be financed by voluntary payroll deductions to provide benefits to adults who become severely functionally impaired. To qualify for benefits, individuals must be 18 years old and have contributed to the program at least 5 years. All working adults will be automatically enrolled in the program, unless they choose not

to be.

There are two benefit tiers: Tier 1 benefits (\$50/day) will be payable to eligible individuals who have 2 or more impairments on Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) or the equivalent cognitive impairments.

Tier 2 benefits (\$100/day) will be payable to individuals who have 4 or more ADLs or the equivalent cognitive impairment.

This legislation builds on the promise and the possibility of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and respects the rights and dignity of all Americans — especially our disabled and senior citizens, to live their life as they choose.

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