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**STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY AT THE NOMINATION
HEARING FOR SECRETARY OF LABOR- DESIGNATE HILDA SOLIS**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

I am pleased to welcome our distinguished nominee for Secretary of Labor, Representative Hilda Solis. And I thank Senator Feinstein for her gracious introduction.

This is not an ordinary hearing, because we do not live in ordinary times. American families are suffering in ways we haven't seen in many years. And the crisis is growing worse every day.

Every morning working families wake up to more bad news. More jobs lost. More pensions gone. More dreams that disappear.

Just this morning, we learned that we lost another 524,000 jobs last month. That is not just a number. It is families like Paula Stein's. Paula worked hard for 30 years. A year ago, she lost her job. Now she can't find work.

She struggles to pay her bills. She stopped taking her medication because she can't afford it. She almost lost her home. Paula played by the rules. She took care of her family. And now everything is gone. Her dignity. Her pride. Her life savings. All gone.

The sad fact is that Paula is not alone. There are millions more Americans just like her. Men and women who can't sleep at night. Parents who look into their children's eyes wondering if they can make it through another day.

They wonder how can we afford health care? How can we pay the rent? How can we put food on the table?

Throughout our history, Americans have come together in times of crisis. Our neighbors, our families, our communities, our churches all pitching in.

But we need leadership in our government, too. We need leaders who understand what working families are facing in today's economy.

I believe that Hilda Solis is just such a leader. She comes from a working family. Her parents sacrificed to give her greater opportunity.

Throughout her career, Hilda has given back to her community and to her nation. She has fought for working families all her life.

In the California Senate and now in Congress, she has been a voice for the voiceless with a true passion for fairness and justice. For her dedication and leadership, she received the Profile in Courage Award. No one could be more deserving of that great honor.

The task before us is great. But Hilda Solis has overcome great challenges all her life. I have no doubt that she can do it again to help our families reclaim the American dream.

Hilda, I thank you for answering the President-Elect's call to serve our country. I look forward to hearing more today about your plans for helping American workers.

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