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Alan Khazei: A Great American Original for U.S. Senate in Massachusetts

For 21 years, since I first heard Alan Khazei outline his plans for City Year, a domestic peace corps, his achievements in citizen service have inspired me. After two decades they do so even more -- enough to get up at 4 a.m. last Thursday -- cheerfully -- to fly to Pittsfield to join him and his wife Vanessa to talk with people in western Massachusetts and hear accounts of "what works," what citizens are doing to solve critical problems in their communities. Alan intends to do that all over the Commonwealth in the 70 campaign days ahead and then in his years as a United States Senator.

In 1960, I campaigned for John Kennedy as an organizer of that campaign's civil rights section and later worked with him to found the Peace Corps. In 1968, at the call of Robert Kennedy I campaigned for him. Over the years I've campaigned and worked closely with Ted Kennedy -- my prime mentor in the Senate in the first half of the 90s. And for 21 months in the last two years, I've campaigned for Barack Obama. So at four-score and three, I'm an old hand at campaigning -- for candidates who stand for what I believe the country needs, who can make a difference.

I believe Alan Khazei, more than anyone I know at this point in our history, can make a difference in the Senate of the United States, for the people of Massachusetts and for all Americans. With his energy, strength and passion, he picks up the torch that John and Robert and Ted carried so bravely. As Senator, by his vote and his voice, he can help assure the success of the Obama administration.

I've had some experience at overcoming odds. In 1991, at age 65, never having run for political office, I had the opportunity to run in a special election, against the Attorney General of the United States and former Pennsylvania governor Dick Thornburgh. I started 47 points behind in the polls. No Democrat had won a Senate seat in 29 years. Carrying the banner of affordable health care for all, I won by ten points. That's one reason I believe Alan can win this race. Alan has what it takes to organize and lead a new citizens' campaign. And Alan is ready to pick up

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that same banner of affordable health care for all that Ted Kennedy wanted to carry to the finish line.

Alan Khazei will be the kind of Senator the founders of this country imagined for the Senate when they drafted the Constitution -- not a career politician but a public citizen, a community, state or national leader not in government office but in the great office of citizen. For that kind of leader you need a Senator with a True Compass. That's what Ted Kennedy used so well, for so long. Alan follows that kind of compass. On any critical program, the needle on his compass points to the common good. And that is why Alan is the only candidate in the race refusing to take PAC and lobbyist money. Alan only wishes to be beholden to the people and their interests.

Of course, it's not what the founders hoped for that counts here and now. It's what the people of Massachusetts need and what the country needs in its newest senator. In losing Ted Kennedy, We the People of the United States lost not just a key Vote but a great Voice -- a great Champion. From seeing Alan in action over many years as an imaginative and indomitable social inventor and citizen leader I believe he has that greatness in him, and will be a great champion on all the vital issues of war and peace, at home and abroad.

Do you see that kind of greatness in any of the other candidates on the list?

The last time I campaigned to support a candidate in Massachusetts, it was for Paul Tsongas -- a star Peace Corps Volunteer I was with, and admired, for two years in Ethiopia where I was the Peace Corps director. Paul was a close friend, and in the Senate became an all-out champion for the kind of large-scale national service that Ted Kennedy and Alan Khazei have been building and is now authorized in the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, Ted's last act that Alan did so much to shape and get passed.

Paul Tsongas, like Ted Kennedy, was an Original. He was different than most politicians.

So is Alan Khazei.

With your help, in these next days to December, the people of Massachusetts can discover that they have another champion who is ready to make a difference -- for the good of Massachusetts and the common good of the country.

www.alanforsenate.com

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