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Closing Remarks
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Thank you for that enthusiastic introduction, Patrick. The power of your commitment, and the power of your determination, is second only to that of your uncle, John Kennedy, whose hand I shook 50 years ago as a freshman in high school. It is no exaggeration to say that being in the presence of someone so determined to make history changed the course of my life. And I believe it is happening again now—not just for me, but for everyone in this room and everyone we can and must activate as a part of the One Mind campaign.

The political landscape today is different than it was 50 years ago, yet strikingly similar in several ways. Fifty years ago the Freedom Riders took on racial prejudice and stigma and galvanized the nation, leading to real change—change in law, to be sure, but also cultural change. The Freedom Riders, civil rights activists, galvanized political will by their engagement, their determination, their courage and their passionate belief in what they championed. There is so much courage, determination and advocacy passion in this room today.

The One Mind forum has inspired us to challenge and overcome—now—the stigma still surrounding mental disease and disability. We know that the law is with us—thanks to Patrick Kennedy and Jim Ramstad and everyone who worked with them on the Mental Health Parity Act—but that law is not enough. We also need cultural change. It's time to speak up, speak with one voice against stigma, as part of the One Mind campaign. It's time for bold advocacy—for more Staglin families and Kennedy families to speak up, for my family, and your family, and all of us to stand shoulder to shoulder so that no one among us can be marginalized or put off, no one ignored or sidelined. It is time to create the political will to end stigma.

There are other noteworthy similarities between 1961 and today. Fifty years ago when President Kennedy addressed the Congress in joint session and declared the intention to send a man to the moon and back, he also spoke of determination to finish turning around a recession, and he described the importance of managing a large federal deficit at the same time that it was critical to invest in becoming more competitive globally. Does this sound familiar? Like our time, the late 1950s and early 1960s was a time of critical decision-making for the nation's future. It meant deciding to spend more money, when money was tight, on a very ambitious project that would take years to accomplish – the moonshot – in order to achieve BOTH a stronger economy and a stronger global position. (Not incidentally, those decisions created good jobs and a better educated, more productive populace, and inspired this nation and the world.)

I don't have to tell this audience that we are at a national crossroads of similar proportions today. Our economy is lagging, and we hear more and more alarm bells going off about losing our global competitiveness. Those alarm bells may not be as dramatic as when the Soviet Union beat the U.S. to space, but they are no less real. Several nations have learned from our example how to drive their economy based on governmental support of research, and they are ramping up their science even as, here in the U.S., researchers are facing the lowest funding rates ever. And other countries now realize what we seem to have forgotten: the economic advantage of innovation accrues to the country where it takes place. Did you know that China now has more capacity in genomic sequencing at ONE research facility in Beijing than we have in our entire nation?

As much as it goes against the way we see our nation, America is no longer ranked #1 in business competitiveness nor has it, for some time now, been ranked #1 on most measures of health. This is the time to create political will for major, world-inspiring change. I think our fellow citizens are ready.

The public knows that our nation's challenges are great and that they call for decisive action. Public opinion polls commissioned by Research!America show that 90% of Americans think the U.S. is in danger of losing its global competitive edge. There has been a 13% increase in just one year of those who strongly agree about this! And, we know that Americans care deeply about health and are unhappy about the continuing inequity in finding answers to mental health disorders. It is time to put those concerns together with what we have heard in this conference—that brain science is ready to step up—no question about that! If we summon the political will, we can make real progress in closing the gap between what we already know and what we do and make real progress in discovering what we still need to know. We must overcome indifference and make the case with passion that more resources must be allocated now to achieve breakthrough advances in brain health. We must do this NOW. Not later, when the economy improves; not later, when the next election cycle is over; not later, when the debt is reduced, but NOW.

So what precisely must each of us do NOW? I have three suggestions:

1. Visit *YourCongressYourHealth.org* to see where your elected officials stand on research-related issues. Contact them using the links on the website of *Your Congress-Your Health* and tell them why more support for brain health research is important, now. Tell them that you plan to vote on this issue.
2. As the 2012 election season gets in full swing, make it a priority to attend rallies and town hall meetings in your community to tell your elected officials that investing in research helps Americans live healthier lives, grows our economy and strengthens our global competitiveness. Tell them to make research for health and brain research a priority. Make it a voting issue.
3. Request face-to-face meetings with your elected officials or one of their legislative aides to tell them why research for brain health should be a central part of their agenda, because it is central to you and central to our nation's future. It can't wait; the 2012 budget must reflect brain research as a priority.

Breath-taking, life-changing national change doesn't happen very often. This is one of those rare times. I urge you to join the Kennedys and the Staglins and all the leaders of brain science and brain health and become advocates together, as a part of the One Mind campaign. Let's create the political will to make history!

Let's join Patrick Kennedy and declare that we have liftoff!