

## New Frontier Awards Honor Congressman, Health Care Entrepreneur



Caroline Kennedy (L), honors award winners Rebecca Onie (C) and Rep. Patrick Murphy (R).  
*Photo Credit: Jon Chase (Harvard News Office)*

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by Robert O'Neill, Harvard Kennedy School Communications

A health care entrepreneur and the first Iraq war veteran to serve in Congress were awarded the John F. Kennedy New Frontier Awards on Monday.

Pennsylvania Rep. Patrick Murphy and Rebecca Onie, co-founder and CEO of project HEALTH, were honored at a ceremony at the John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum.

Murphy, 36, served in the Army as a prosecutor and instructor of Constitutional law at West Point, but after 9/11 volunteered to deploy, eventually serving as a captain in the 82nd Airborne Division in Bosnia and Iraq.

Monday, he described how he thought of his fallen comrades as he took the oath of office in 2006. "I remember feeling a lump in my throat and the tears in my eyes," he said. "I remember a feeling of determination not to let them down – to honor them, and their sacrifices."

He said his service in Congress has required moral courage, such as his difficult opposition to funding for the Iraq war and his leadership in the fight to repeal the armed services' "don't ask, don't tell" law, which prohibits openly gay troops from serving.

Rebecca Onie '98 J.D. '03, 32, began Project HEALTH when she was a sophomore at Harvard College. Her interest in poverty, she told the audience, had led her to work on at the housing unit at Boston Legal Services. But she realized that health issues were often to blame for the housing problems she saw.

The non-profit she created, Project HEALTH, helps connect low-income patients with the social resources they need to be healthy, such as housing, food, heating oil, childcare and legal advocacy.

"Even though it is well documented ... that access to basic resource needs profoundly effects health outcomes, we do not have a health care system that is designed to address those needs," she said. Project HEALTH's aspiration, she said, "is to change how health care is delivered in this country."

Project HEALTH now operates in six cities, where volunteers from colleges and universities serve more than 4,000 families.

The [New Frontier Awards](#), created in 2004 by the John F. Kennedy Library and the [Institute of Politics](#), honor Americans under the age of 40 who have made special contributions through their public service.

They are named for a term famously used by President John F. Kennedy during his acceptance speech at the 1960 Democratic National Convention to describe his administration's progressive aspirations. Recipients of the award receive a ship's navigational compass in a wooden box with an inscription from Kennedy's acceptance speech: "We stand today on the edge of a New Frontier ... I believe the times demand new invention, innovation, imagination, decision. I am asking each of you to be pioneers on that new Frontier."

"Congressman Murphy and Rebecca Onie are remarkable young leaders who share my father's belief that one person can make a difference," said Caroline Kennedy, president of the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation and member of the senior advisory committee of the Institute of Politics.

Past winners include Wendy Kopp, founder and CEO of Teach for America, and Cory Booker, mayor of Newark, N.J.