

POLITICO

Filmmakers debut HBO documentary

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Tired of health care reform? HBO has the cure: a documentary on immigration reform.

But “The Senators’ Bargain,” which debuts Wednesday night, is really a portrait of the late Sen. Ted Kennedy. Starting in 2001, it follows one of Kennedy’s final legislative battles — for the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act — until the bill fails in 2007.

Filmmakers Shari Robertson and Michael Camerini enjoyed unrestricted access to Kennedy, mainly because they were Washington newbies. “When we started out, it was all so new and strange for us to be filming in the Senate,” Robertson told POLITICO. “And sticking it out as long as we did put people at ease. ... They stopped paying attention to us.”

The documentary highlights Kennedy at work and in quiet moments; Sens. Robert Menendez, Jon Kyl and then-Sen. Barack Obama have cameos.

Robertson and Camerini say they were impressed by the respect other senators — including John McCain and Lindsey Graham — showed Kennedy. Kennedy's framed thank-you note from Trent Lott illustrated it all: “It was at that moment that we really understood what it’s like to be in that club,” Camerini said.

— Kiki Ryan

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