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**KENNEDY ON RISE IN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE**

WASHINGTON, DC— Today's jobs numbers show a significant increase in the unemployment rate, from 4.7% in November to 5.0% in December. Nearly 500,000 more Americans became unemployed, the largest increase in a single month since 2001. Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, put out the following statement:

"This sharp increase in the unemployment rate comes as no surprise to America's working families who have been struggling to make ends meet in the Bush economy. More and more Americans are losing their jobs and, at the same time, the nation's safety net is eroding. It's time to put aside the President's do-nothing economic policies and take swift and fair action to stimulate the economy and improve our unemployment system, so that the millions of Hardworking people who have lost their jobs can support their families and find new opportunities to get back on their feet."

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