



Bayh bombshell leaves both Democrats & Republicans scrambling for open Senate seat

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Washington, Feb. 15 – Sen. Evan Bayh (D-IN) may have decided to give the American people what they’ve asked for . . . and let them see how they like the result. In a surprise announcement Monday, Bayh has scrapped his \$12 million bid for a third Senate term and said that “After all these years, my passion for service to my fellow citizens is undiminished, but my desire to do so in Congress has waned. My decision was not motivated by political concern. Even in the current challenging environment, I am confident in my prospects for re-election.”

Recent opinion polls show the American public saying they’re sick of all incumbents and want new leaders in Washington. Faced with this negative public sentiment and with the sharp partisan divide which has stalled House-passed legislation in the Senate, Bayh said Monday that he now believes “there are better ways to serve my fellow citizens, my beloved state and our nation than continued service in Congress.”

Bayh, the 54-year-old former Indiana Secretary of State and two-term Indiana Governor whose father Birch Bayh was a U.S. Senator, remains popular in Indiana where he topped 60 percent in both of his elections to the U.S. Senate. White House Communications Director Dan Pfeiffer, a former Bayh staffer, dismissed the idea that Bayh could have been defeated by former Republican Senator Dan Coats this coming November. Recent polls showed Bayh with a solid 20 point lead over Coats.

One surprising aspect to Bayh’s withdrawal is that it leaves virtually no time for Democrats to field a replacement. Second-term House Member Brad Ellsworth (D-IN) is the leading contender – but he faces the deadline of this Friday, Feb. 19th to qualify to run. One requirement: gathering at least 500 valid signatures from citizens in each of Indiana’s nine congressional districts to certify his candidacy for Bayh’s Senate seat. This same requirement and four-day window could make it equally tough for popular conservative Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN) to challenge Coats as a Republican contender for the seat.

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