



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on March 3, 2023

At CPAC, Rick Scott Hints Fight Against McConnell Isn't Over

Shots continued to be fired in the ever-more personal feud between Republican senators Mitch McConnell and Rick Scott. What does this mean for the future of GOP politics?

This time around, it was Scott, the former governor of Florida, who [took aim at McConnell](#), the Kentuckian who has served as the GOP's leader in the Senate since 2007.

On Thursday, Scott spoke at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington, D.C. During his speech, he lashed out at the "old Republican establishment" on the Hill and didn't hesitate to name McConnell as belonging to that group.



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"Unfortunately, some of the leaders of our old Republican establishment have been in Washington way too long and forgotten why they came here," said Scott, who before entering politics amassed a multimillion-dollar fortune as a healthcare executive. "They've gotten used to caving in to the Democrats. They do it over and over and over. Instead of the Democrats compromising their liberal principles, they roll over, and compromise our conservative principles."

He threw more shade at his "establishment" Republican colleagues, arguing that "It's not just the Democrats in Washington who are destroying our country. You have heard the famous quote: 'We have met the enemy and he is us'."

Due to his roughly \$300 million net worth, status as a major Republican donor, and record as a popular Republican governor who then flipped a Senate seat by defeating one of Florida's longest-serving Democrats, Scott was quickly allowed into inner establishment circles upon entering the Senate in 2019.

Even though he was Florida's junior senator and had only been in the chamber for a couple of years, Scott was tapped to lead the prestigious National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) from 2021 to 2023.

But his chairmanship resulted in a bitter and public feud with McConnell over policy and the direction the GOP should take, culminating in Scott launching a challenge to McConnell's position of Senate Minority Leader in November.

While Scott only got 10 votes to McConnell's 37, it was nevertheless an impressive feat given the typical party culture of no opposition to the sitting leader.

Speaking to the CPAC audience of Republican activists and devotees, many of whom belong to the hardcore conservative, pro-Trump faction of the party, Scott said he stands by his decision to challenge



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McConnell — and even hinted that the fight isn't over.

"When I took on Sen. McConnell, I knew it would be hard, and I assumed I would have a hard time winning. But we have to start somewhere. Everyone in Washington said I was nuts, and I might be. But we can't put up with this BS any more," Scott said.

He added, "My belief is that my challenge to Sen. McConnell was not the end of something, it was the beginning of something." He even compared himself to fighter Conor McGregor, declaring, "I'd like to apologize to absolutely nobody."

Last month, in what was seen as an act of revenge, McConnell took Scott off the influential Senate Commerce Committee. McConnell also removed Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), who had voted for Scott in the GOP leadership race.

The falling out between Scott and McConnell has its origin in the 2022 election. McConnell notably refused to put out a legislative agenda for the party that would have given voters a specific idea of what the GOP intended to do should it take back the Senate.

In the absence of such an articulated vision from the official leader of Republicans in the Senate, Scott put forth his own agenda while head of the NRSC — one with controversial policy positions that gave the mainstream media ammunition and from which McConnell quickly moved to distance the party.

"Unfortunately, that was the Scott plan. That's not a Republican plan," McConnell said of the proposal in February.

While it can be debated whether Scott is a true constitutionalist, he's right in articulating the need for a challenge to McConnell and other power brokers within the Republican Party.

Not only has the Kentucky lawmaker proven to be a stumbling block for constitutional legislation by constantly enabling big government and big spending, but there's plenty of blight on him personally, such as his [questionable financial ties](#) to Communist China.

Again, whether or not Scott is the man who should serve as the voice of a new generation of GOP leadership, his willingness to put his hat in the ring against McConnell was informative in that it showed that there is a growing number of Republican senators — at least 20 percent of them — who are willing to buck custom and support a more conservative alternative, even if it means being targeted by McConnell's vengeance.

Also, Scott's vocal feuding has revealed that, contrary to the prevailing belief, McConnell does not have total control over all of the big money or institutional resources.

This can be seen in the fact that one of the influential voices to support Scott amid all the drama has been the powerful GOP donor group Club for Growth, whose president, David McIntosh, has thrown shade at McConnell.

What this means is that there is a foundation to build on for the purpose of, if not removing McConnell, at least securing much more conservative leadership when the 81-year-old inevitably retires in a few years.



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