



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on February 17, 2023

McConnell-Scott Feud Continues Within Senate GOP

Friendly fire is being unleashed within Republican establishment circles.

Senator Rick Scott (R-Fla.) was taken off his favorite committee, the Commerce Committee, in the new Congress despite his prominent status as a former governor, multi-millionaire, and emeritus chair of the powerful National Republican Senatorial Committee.

Scott, who is up for reelection in 2024, [suspects why](#): It's an act of revenge by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) because the Florida Senator dared launch a failed challenge for the position of Senate GOP leader.



AP Images
Rick Scott

For the moment, Scott is finding ways around the cracked relationship. For instance, despite no longer being on Commerce, he's working through senators who are, such as Ted Cruz (R-Texas).

"I'm gonna get my stuff done. I work well with Ted Cruz, and he's the ranking member," Scott told Politico. "So I'll just work with him."

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 just last week.

The strained relationship between the two men came to a head during Senate Republicans' leadership election in November. Many voices dissatisfied with the GOP establishment have long wanted to see a viable challenge to McConnell's seemingly unquestioned leadership — which he has held since 2007.

Scott was the man to finally work up the courage to mount a challenge. While he only garnered 10 votes to McConnell's 37, the fact that he was able to convince a fifth of the caucus to go against the norm and support a direct challenge to the deeply entrenched D.C. fixture that is McConnell was a feat not lost on the Kentuckian.

"Petty retribution can be a dangerous pattern in this place, particularly with a small body," said Cruz in an interview with regard to Scott's removal from the Commerce Committee. "There's an old proverb: when you look for revenge, you better dig two graves."

Politico notes:



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Indeed, the GOP senators' ongoing back-and-forth is creating plenty of intrigue — particularly given how taciturn McConnell usually is. As Sen. Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.) put it: "He's a pretty patient guy, but occasionally even Mitch McConnell has a right to stand up for himself. That's what I think he's doing."

Others see things differently.

"The leader's role is to support incumbent senators. He certainly did it up in Alaska," said Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), who supported Scott in the leadership fight. "Certainly don't denigrate them, don't say anything negative about them. Financial support is one thing, but just verbal support is his responsibility. So, beyond disappointing."

McConnell has even suggested that Scott's controversial plan could hurt his reelection bid. Scott pushed back without naming names.

"Who does really well with what we've been doing, just spending money like it's going out of style? The elites do, people who make money off of the government do. Wall Street makes money," he said recently. "Who doesn't like my plan? Those people."

Scott narrowly won his first term back in 2018 against then-longtime incumbent Democrat Bill Nelson, spending \$60 million of his own money in the process. But Florida has moved rightward electorally since then and observers, like fellow Floridian Senator Marco Rubio, don't doubt he'll win a second term — especially since no primary challengers or viable Democratic opponents are presently on the horizon.

"He's gonna win. He's won three statewide races already," Rubio told Politico. "I don't think he's going to have a problem winning reelection."

Moreover, the NRSC remains committed to helping Scott get reelected, as is the main McConnell-aligned Super PAC. McConnell may not like Scott, but he recognizes that holding onto that seat is crucial for Republicans' hope to win back the chamber next fall.

Scott also has the support of the influential conservative money group [Club for Growth](#), which backed him in 2018. The organization's president, David McIntosh, isn't afraid of throwing shade at McConnell.

"While other Republicans have caved to massive tax-and-spend packages that have strained our economy, Rick Scott has consistently championed small government solutions centered around fiscal responsibility, and because of that he's faced the unfounded and false attacks of liberal Democrats like President Biden and even establishment Republicans like Leader McConnell," McIntosh told Politico.

It's clear that McConnell can tolerate many things — reckless spending, unconstitutional big government, and selling the country out to Communist China. But posing a threat to his power is something he can't forgive.

The latest petty squabble demonstrates once more why McConnell and career politicians like him are exactly what's wrong with the Republican Party.



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