



# GOP Establishment Will Handpick Candidates in 2024 Primaries

The establishment Republican Party apparatus is moving in early to tilt the advantage in favor of more moderate candidates in 2024 primary races, acting under the guise of protecting the party's chances of retaking the Senate. Are they right? Or is this simply another play to keep power out of the hands of the conservative wing?

In Indiana, the establishment has already jumped in to anoint their candidate for the senate seat that opened up with the retirement of Senator Mike Braun. The National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) on Tuesday announced its endorsement of Representative Jim Banks only minutes after former Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels (R) said he would not be running.

As [The Hill](#) reported, Senator Steve Daines (R-Mont.), the NRSC's new chairman, called Banks "one of our top recruits this cycle" and said he is "looking forward to working with [him]."

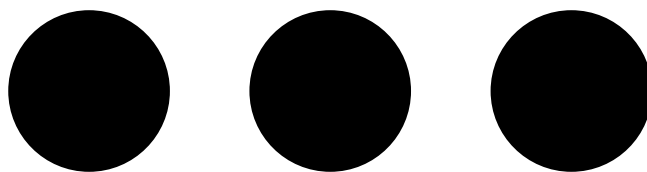
In establishment circles, the news provoked a sigh of relief among those who desperately want party leadership to play a more prominent role in drafting candidates within primaries.

Senator John Cornyn (R-Texas), who chaired the NRSC in the 2010 and 2012 elections, said, "I think we've seen what happens when we nominate people who can win a primary but can't pivot toward a general election and get the broad support you need to win. You don't get to govern if you can't win an election. Winning is the first important step."

It's not surprising that Banks scored the NRSC's endorsement. A source told [The Hill](#) that the congressman met with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell last week and that the meeting "went very well."

Daines is demonstrating a decision to take a more active role in primary contests than his predecessor, Senator Rick Scott (R-Fla.).

That's not to say that Scott was completely impartial. As is customary for the establishment, he [favored incumbents](#) over primary challengers — even when these challengers were backed by President Donald Trump.



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

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But picking sides in open races such as Indiana's goes a step further. Yet this is precisely what many within establishment GOP circles are clamoring for.

"There is no more welcome sight than the committee activating again and indicating their interest in delivering success for Senate Republicans in 2024 after the cycle we just went through with a committee that seemed more interested with the chairman's campaign for president than the GOP's campaign for Senate," a GOP operative with involvement in Senate races said on condition of anonymity to *The Hill*. "It's just nice to have a team in charge that puts Senate Republicans ahead of themselves."

That's the spin they put on it, of course. "Delivering success." Putting the "party ahead of themselves." But in reality, are they merely putting their own Beltway interests ahead of those of the conservative voter base?

The NRSC has gotten heavily involved in primaries in past elections cycles, notably in 2014 after losing what were considered winnable contests in previous elections. Following disappointing results in 2022, including failure to take back the Senate, the establishment wing appears unwilling to leave nominations up to voters again.

"We certainly were willing to help anyone who won a primary, but we tried to encourage good people to be in a primary — good people just being good candidates," said Senator Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), who led the NRSC during 2014 — the year Republicans claimed a Senate majority.

Speaking about the NRSC's involvement in primaries, one party operative told *The Hill*, "It demonstrates in the clearest possible terms that the NRSC is not a building full of disinterested observers. That they want to win, and if you as a candidate have a history of losing, you'll have an uphill climb to win their trust."

Indeed, the committee's rapid endorsement of Banks is seen as a warning of sorts to dissuade other candidates from even bothering to enter the race. In other words, it's a way for the establishment to hand-pick its own candidates — because apparently primary voters can't be trusted.

And just who does the establishment want to anoint in 2024? The NRSC already has its sight set on potential picks in key races.

At *The Hill* reports:

In Ohio, Secretary of State Frank LaRose (R) and state Sen. Matt Dolan (R), who lost the 2022 primary to Vance, are considered strong general election candidates, while David McCormick is the preeminent name mentioned in Pennsylvania against Sen. Bob Casey (D).

West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice (R), who said he is leaning toward running for the Senate, Rep. Alex Mooney (R-W.Va.) and state Attorney General Patrick Morrissey (R) are angling for a match-up against Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.). Finally, in Montana, Reps. Ryan Zinke (R) and Matt Rosendale (R) both may run to potentially face Sen. Jon Tester (D). Tester defeated Rosendale in 2018.

Arizona is one state where the NRSC is likely to get involved. Republicans have seen the upcoming Senate race with eager anticipation because incumbent Senator Krysten Sinema switched from Democrat to Independent and Democrats are running Representative Ruben Gallego — thereby setting up a split vote on the Left.



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But the GOP establishment is worried that the party could blow it if candidates who are popular with the base but who lost statewide races in 2022 — specifically failed Senate candidate Blake Masters and failed gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake — end up scoring the Republican nomination.

“Just look at what happened in the last two elections. You in no way have to guess what happens when MAGA candidates ignore bread-and-butter issues that Arizonans care about,” Arizona GOP strategist Barrett Marson told [Politico](#). “Kari Lake is not governor. Blake Masters is not senator. Republicans have to get back to basics.”



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