



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on December 7, 2012

DeMint Will Quit Senate to Head Heritage Foundation

The nation may or may not go over the  "fiscal cliff," but Republican Jim DeMint will be going off the hill in January. The South Carolina senator announced Thursday he will resign his Senate seat next month to become president of the conservative think tank the Heritage Foundation. The organization's founder, Edwin J. Feulner, will step down as president in April.

The conservative senator, a favorite of Tea Party activists, said in a written statement he will continue to defend the principles and advance the policies he believes in.

"I'm leaving the Senate now, but I'm not leaving the fight," the statement said. "I've decided to join The Heritage Foundation at a time when the conservative movement needs strong leadership in the battle of ideas. No organization is better equipped to lead this fight and I believe my experience in public office as well as in the private sector as a business owner will help Heritage become even more effective in the years to come." Later, DeMint [told](#) Fox News, "I honestly believe I can do a lot more on the outside than on the inside."

De Mint, 62, was elected to a second term in 2010. Widely regarded as among the most conservative members of the Senate, he has not been bashful about breaking party ranks, recently criticizing fellow Republicans for agreeing to put revenue increases on the table in negotiations with Senate Democrats and the White House to avert the "fiscal cliff" of tax increases and spending cuts to take effect starting January 1 unless Congress and the president reach a deficit reduction agreement. DeMint received a 100 percent rating in the latest edition of "The Freedom Index" published by *The New American*, which rates the voting record of Congress members on key issues to show their level of "adherence to constitutional principles of limited government, fiscal responsibility, national sovereignty and a traditional foreign policy of avoiding foreign entanglements." DeMint received an 85 percent cumulative rating on votes cast over the past two years.

While easily winning reelection in 2010, DeMint made the unconventional move of endorsing other candidates favored by the conservative Tea Party movement while they were engaged in Senate primary battles against "moderate" Republicans. Some, like the controversial Christine O'Donnell in Delaware, won their primaries but lost the general election in key states Republicans had expected to win. This year DeMint backed challenger Richard Mourdock in the Senate primary in Indiana, where Mourdock upset veteran Senator Richard Lugar, but lost in November to Democratic Congressman Joe Donnelly. Republicans fell well short of their goal of winning back this year the control of the upper chamber that it had to the Democrats in 2006. The GOP in fact suffered a net loss of two members, ending up with 45 of the 100 Senate seats.

While the headquarters of the Heritage Foundation is but a short walk from the senate side of Capitol Hill, the think tank may provide a more congenial environment for the causes and issues DeMint plans to pursue than does the Congress, where protection of interests generally takes precedence over the "battle of ideas."

Some of the ideas the foundation has advanced in the past, however, have caused some friction on the



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right. Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich was criticized during one of the GOP presidential primary debates this year for having endorsed the idea of a government mandate requiring individuals to buy health insurance when it was [promoted](#) by the Heritage Foundation in the 1980s. The mandate, a feature of the Romney health care law in Massachusetts, became an anathema to Republicans — including Romney — when it became the focal point of the ObamaCare plan. Both Gingrich and the Heritage Foundation have since abandoned the idea.

The foundation has also been a consistent advocate of an interventionist foreign policy, having published as recently as November of last year the conclusion that the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 was “[a risk worth taking.](#)” DeMint also [supported](#) the Iraq policy of President George W. Bush, after having opposed the NATO intervention in Kosovo during the Clinton administration.

“This is a crucial moment for America and for the conservative movement — and we are seizing it,” Thomas A. Saunders, chairman of the Heritage Foundation, said in [heralding](#) DeMint’s move.

“Jim DeMint has shown that principled conservatism remains a winning political philosophy,” Saunders said. “His passion for rigorous research, his dedication to the principles of our nation’s founding, and his ability to translate policy ideas into action make him an ideal choice to lead Heritage to even greater success.”

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, a Republican, will appoint a temporary successor to serve until the next election. The state’s senior senator, Lindsey Graham, praised his departing colleague, saying the Senate’s loss will be the Heritage Foundation’s gain.

Photo of Sen. Jim DeMint: AP Images



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