



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on January 6, 2010

## Dodd Drops Out of Senate Race

U.S. Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn., picture at left) is expected to announce this morning that he will not be a candidate for a sixth term in the Senate, thus ending a Dodd family reign in the Senate and in Connecticut politics that goes back to the election of his father, Thomas J. Dodd, to the Senate in 1958. The elder Dodd, a popular prosecutor with a strong anti-communist stance, was a favorite with the state's conservative Catholic Democrats and was a familiar speaker at Catholic events, being a frequent keynoter at Knights of Columbus communion breakfasts.



Ironically, it was a financial scandal that led to the elder Dodd's censure by the U.S. Senate over his personal use of money from a testimonial that most assumed would go into his reelection campaign. Sen. Christopher Dodd, who chairs the Senate Banking Committee, has been tainted by reports that he was given favored VIP treatment and a low-interest loan by Countryside Financial, a subprime lender that came under scrutiny during the financial crisis of 2008. He has been consistently behind potential GOP challenger Rob Simmons in Connecticut polls. Simmons, a former House member, has his own challenger in World Wrestling Entertainment co-founder Linda McMahon, who is also seeking the Republican nomination for Dodd's seat. Investment guru Peter Schiff had also been discussed as a possible contender for the Republican nod.

Dodd's announcement comes on the heels of a similar decision announced by Sen. Byron Dorgan of North Dakota, thus creating open races in two states where Democratic incumbents had been expected to run, and until fairly recently, had been expected to win. The decision leaves Connecticut Democrats with an uncertain future, since the state's junior senator, Joseph Lieberman, lost his primary bid in 2006 and ran and won as an independent. Though he still caucuses with the Democrats, Lieberman appears at times to be edging closer to a formal affiliation with the Republican Party. His status there would be "iffy" as well, since many Republicans, though welcoming Lieberman's hawkish stand on foreign and military policy and his resolute support of Israel against its militant neighbors, are hostile toward his liberalism on domestic issues, including a strong abortion "rights" stand that had him voting against a ban on even partial-birth abortions.

Dodd, by contrast, is more to the left on foreign policy and military matters than his father, who was to the right of the party's center. The elder Dodd was of the Harry Truman through Lyndon Johnson tradition, with an anti-communist stand similar to that of his colleague, Sen. Henry Jackson, (D-Wash.), or any one of a number of congressional Democrats from the South, who were strong on anti-communism and military preparedness. Christopher Dodd, by contrast, followed the party's shift to the left that occurred most dramatically with the nomination of Sen. George McGovern of South Dakota for president in 1972. McGovern, a leading opponent of the Vietnam War — while the elder Dodd was a strong and vocal supporter of the American effort there — led the party to a crushing defeat, losing 49



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states and carrying only Massachusetts.

In the House and later in the Senate, Christopher Dodd opposed U.S. support of the Contra rebels in Nicaragua attempting to overthrow the Marxist Sandinista regime of Daniel Ortega. He also objected to U.S. support for the anti-communist dictatorship in El Salvador that sparked a civil war in that country. Before entering politics, Dodd had served in the Peace Corps.

The younger Dodd, 66, was both a close personal friend and political ally of the late Sen. Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts. Dodd has taken part vigorously in the effort to bring national health care through Congress, a cause that Kennedy called his number one issue. Dodd's political alliances are primarily with liberals and he has fit easily into a party whose center is decidedly to the left of where it was in his father's day. On the issue of abortion, for example, the younger Dodd fell in line with a national party that champions the "right" to abortion supposedly found in the U.S. Constitution by the United States Supreme Court in the *Roe v. Wade* decision of January 22, 1973. During his father's career, abortion had not yet emerged as a national issue. But in predominantly Catholic Connecticut, the Legislature repeatedly turned back attempts to overturn the state's anti-abortion statute, passed in 1820. Ironically it was the state's Protestant, even Puritan, early inhabitants who wrote the laws against contraception and abortion long before Catholic newcomers were allowed to vote in the state. But those laws came under siege at a time when Catholics had become a majority and the state's bishops and its Catholic institutions resisted the overturn of those restrictions.

Christopher Dodd's 30 years in the Senate were preceded by six years in the U.S. House of representatives. His election to the upper chamber in 1980 resisted that year's electoral tide, as droves of "Reagan Democrats" left their party to elect the former California governor over the fading fortunes of President Jimmy Carter. He defeated former U.S. Senator James L. Buckley, a Connecticut resident who had won a U.S. Senate seat in New York in 1970, running as the Conservative Party candidate against Democrat James Ottinger and Charles Goodell, a liberal Republican. Vice President Spiro T. Agnew characterized Goodell as an ideological cross-dresser, labeling him "the Christine Jorgensen of the Republican Party." Buckley, running for reelection as both the Republican Party and the Conservative Party candidate, was defeated by UN Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan in 1976.

Dodd was the state's junior U.S. Senator until 1988, when Lieberman, then the state's attorney general, defeated three-term Sen. Lowell Weicker, the Republican who had defeated Dodd's father, then running as an independent, and Democrat Joseph Duffy in 1970. Dodd has championed liberal causes and received endorsements from organizations like the National Abortion Rights Action League that had regarded his father as either an anathema or an annoying irrelevance. His pro-abortion stand was aided and abetted by a new breed of liberal Catholics in the state and nation, including some priests and theologians at Catholic universities, long in dissent from the encyclical *Humane Vitae* (Of Human Life), published by Pope Paul VI in 1968. Whether the dissenting clerics and theologians had comprehended or even read the encyclical they were denouncing was always an open question.

Father Robert Drinan, a Jesuit priest elected to the U.S. House from Massachusetts, gave ecclesiastical cover to Catholics like Kennedy and Dodd who were always "personally opposed" to abortion, but claimed they could not let their personal moral and religious convictions dictate policy for a pluralistic society. Dodd told Catholics objecting to his "pro-choice" stance that his position was "the same as Father Drinan's." Drinan eventually left the Congress under orders from Pope John Paul II

Dodd's decision comes less than two years after he was seeking his party's presidential nomination. In late 2007 and early 2008, he literally moved with his family into Iowa in the weeks before the Iowa



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caucuses to campaign there. Apparently believing he needed a strong showing in Iowa to be viable in New Hampshire's leadoff primary, he skipped campaigning in the New England state where he was better known and where he might have benefited from his connections with the Kennedy family — though Sen., Kennedy and his niece, Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg, the daughter of the late President John F. Kennedy, publicly endorsed Barack Obama. Finishing near the bottom of the pack in the early voting, Dodd soon dropped out.

His announcement today follows a slippage in the polls, largely attributable to the allegations about his favored treatment by Countrywide. A familiar face and distinguished white hair will soon be missing from Connecticut and national politics. In Connecticut, where the office of Attorney General is an elective post, Attorney General Richard Blumenthal is said to be in line to run for the Senate seat. Blumenthal, first elected in 1990, is now serving an unprecedented fifth consecutive term as the state's attorney general.

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