



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on November 11, 2022

Rick Scott Backed Down From Challenging McConnell for Leadership

Mitch McConnell's standing among his own party continues to decline, yet there continues to be a lack of an organized, viable alternative to remove him from Republican leadership.

According to a [Politico](#) report, Senator Rick Scott (R-Fla.) was making moves to challenge McConnell (R-Ky.) for the position of GOP Senate leader. But those plans reportedly came crashing down in light of the midterm results, which saw Scott-backed candidates underperform at the ballot box.

Scott, a former governor of Florida who made a fortune worth roughly \$300 million as a hospital executive, has tried to carve a prominent name for himself in the Senate despite being only a junior senator less than four years into his first term.



AP Images
Rick Scott

As head of the important National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC), Scott wields considerable influence on Capitol Hill, controlling funding to help elect Republicans to Congress' upper chamber. But Scott's vision has at times placed him at odds with McConnell, and those close to the Florida senator told Politico he was willing to cross hairs with the Minority Leader in an even bigger way.

"Scott had cut an announcement video declaring his intentions, word had reached some prominent conservatives outside the Senate and a handful of GOP senators had gotten wind of his plan and started calculating just how many votes his longshot campaign could accrue at the leadership vote next week in the Capitol," wrote Politico's Jonathan Martin.

Scott apparently anticipated that he would lose a direct challenge to McConnell's leadership, but his real goal was, per Republicans familiar with Scott's plan, to ingratiate himself with the pro-Trump, grassroots faction of the party and thereby set himself up for bigger things later on.

President Donald Trump, in fact, recently [touted Scott](#) as a "likely candidate" for Senate leader while simultaneously bashing McConnell.

Scott's ultimate aim, according to those who know him, is to be president one day, and he viewed a challenge to McConnell as a stepping stone on that path.

For that same reason, Scott used his role at NRSC to support a slew of candidates to the right of McConnell's preferences. This included Ohio's J.D. Vance, Arizona's Blake Masters, Georgia's Herschel Walker, Pennsylvania's Mehmet Oz, and New Hampshire's Donald Bolduc. Generally, these were also the candidates who had Trump's backing.

But when the results came in on Election Night, only Vance won outright. Masters looks poised to lose



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even with many votes remaining to be counted. Walker's fate is uncertain, as he heads to a December runoff against Democrat incumbent Raphael Warnock.

Politico narrates the tension between McConnell and Scott and their respective camps:

In September, Scott lashed back at McConnell for his candidate critique, telling POLITICO's Burgess Everett that the two senators had "a strategic disagreement" over what Scott called their slate of "great candidates."

Meanwhile, McConnell and his lieutenants have all but put in neon their disappointment with Scott's stewardship of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, particularly its fundraising struggles.

The Senate Leadership Fund, McConnell's super PAC, was responsible for the vast majority of outside spending in every major Senate race. The leader's advisers have been exasperated with how much the NRSC put into early advertising and viewed more modest spending closer to the election in Colorado and Washington as a waste of resources, a view affirmed by the Democrats' lopsided margins in both states.

And as *The New American* [previously reported](#), the two Republican senators clashed earlier this year after Scott put out a controversial policy agenda that the Senate Minority Leader took issue with.

McConnell, however, has been criticized even by others in establishment GOP circles for failing to put out a cohesive vision for why voters should have voted Republican in the midterms.

For example, Club for Growth President David McIntosh [said](#) Wednesday that "Mitch failed to make this a referendum on why Republicans were better than the Biden agenda and the Democrats, and he knocked down anybody's efforts to have a platform to run on."

McIntosh, whose organization is one of the most sought-after for funding Republican candidates, further criticized McConnell's "style of campaigning," which he described as "spend money and go back and use that money to try to get yourself elected. It didn't work in a lot of these close races."

Scott has dropped his plans to challenge McConnell due to the midterm results, but it's uncertain how many votes he could muster in the chamber even if he were to go through with it.

But he might have had the support of Senator Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), who is on the record saying, "I'm not sure if any other senator will run or not. Nobody's indicated they would. But my view is that we need new leadership in that position."



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