



Indiana Democratic Shakeup: Will Evan Bayh Turn the Senate Blue?

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In a move widely hailed as giving the Democrats more hope to retake the U.S. Senate, Democrat nominee and former U.S. Representative Baron Hill announced his withdrawal from the Indiana Senate race on Monday. CNN reported that former governor, former senator, and current lobbyist Evan Bayh will enter the race in his place.

Bayh will be running against Representative Todd Young to fill the seat of retiring Senator Dan Coates. Until Monday, Young was considered a strong favorite to win the race in November.

"I do not want to stand in the way of Democrats winning Indiana and the U.S. Senate," Hill said in a withdrawal statement. "That would not be fair to my party or my state. And, the stakes are far too high in this election not to put my country above my own political ambitions."

Bayh has not yet confirmed that he will run, but a statement is expected later on Monday. His entrance into the race has led many to consider what was a relatively safe Republican seat now a toss-up. The former senator has nearly \$10 million in his campaign account from the 2010 race, which he lost to Senator Coates.

Nevertheless, Bayh carries a great deal of baggage. After deciding against running for re-election in 2010, he told *The Washington Post's* Ezra Klein "I want to be engaged in an honorable line of work." After a scathing article attacking money in politics, Bayh retired to become ... a lobbyist! He also became a commentator on Fox News. Klein wrote a scathing piece in the *Post* condemning "The Sad, Hypocritical Retirement of Evan Bayh."

The "corrosive system of campaign financing" that Bayh considered such a threat? He's being paid by both McGuire Woods and Apollo Global Management to act as a corroding agent on their behalf. The "strident partisanship" and "unyielding ideology" he complained was ruining the Senate? At Fox News, he'll be right there on set while it gets cooked up. His warning that "what is required from members of Congress and the public alike is a new spirit of devotion to the national welfare beyond party or self-interest" sounds, in retrospect, like a joke. Evan Bayh

doing performance art as Evan Bayh. Exactly which of these new positions would Bayh say is against his self-interest, or in promotion of the general welfare?

When running for office in heavily red Indiana, it might help for Bayh to show up on Fox News - though, as a former governor and former senator he doesn't need much more name recognition. Nevertheless, his speech on retiring from the Senate outed this moderate politician as a radical at heart. His push on campaign finance proved rather brazen.

He then went after money in politics, calling for "legislation to enhance disclosure requirements, require corporate donors to appear in the political ads they finance and prohibit government contractors or bailout beneficiaries from spending money on political campaigns," not to mention "public matching funds for smaller contributions. Bayh had no record of leadership on any of these topics. But, in part for that reason, it was particularly potent to hear him speaking out on them.

That is, until he retired and became a rich and powerful lobbyist. *National Journal's* Josh Krushaar explained why this is such a big liability this year.

Concern about money in politics is one of the key populist issues which promoted Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in their presidential races, and it may prove a powerful weapon against Bayh this November.

Nevertheless, as Vox's Dylan Matthews put it, Bayh is "a throwback to a much more conservative Democratic Party." In 1996 the Cato Institute praised him as "far more pro-business and pro-taxpayer than the national Democratic Party," and "a fiscally conservative Democrat in his record, not just his rhetoric."

Although he was once considered second to Biden as Obama's Vice Presidential pick, Bayh was very tepid in supporting the president's agenda. Bayh even occasionally threatened to filibuster Obamacare, and was very lukewarm about Obama's cap-and-trade legislation. While he ultimately backed most of the president's agenda, including the stimulus, Obamacare, and Dodd-Frank, his hesitance may play well in Indiana.

There has not yet been strong public polling in this race, but commentators are expecting much more of a toss-up than previously thought. After Marco Rubio announced his run for re-election in Florida seemed to lock down Democratic hopes of a Senate takeover, Bayh might have reopened those doors. Stay tuned.