

Friday, May 1, 2009 As of 5:33 PM EDT

More


BUSINESS


U.S. Edition Today's Paper Video Columns Blogs Graphics Journal Community [Log In](#) [Register for FREE](#)

[Home](#) [World](#) [U.S.](#) [Business](#) [Markets](#) [Tech](#) [Personal Finance](#) [Life & Style](#) [Opinion](#) [Careers](#) [Real Estate](#) [Small Business](#)

[Asia](#) [Europe](#) [Earnings](#) [Economy](#) [Health](#) [Law](#) [Autos](#) [Management](#) [Media & Marketing](#) [More Industries](#) [Columns & Blogs](#)

TOP STORIES IN Business

1 of 10  **Fiat Steps Up Plans for Opel**

2 of 10  **Chrysler Ads Promote Confidence**

3 of 10 **Globe Unions Go Down to the Wire**

Boeing's First Track

MAY 1, 2009, 5:33 P.M. ET

US Supreme Court Vacancy An Early Test For Sen Specter

Article



Email



Printer Friendly

Share:

[Yahoo Buzz](#)[Save This](#)[Text](#)

By Brent Kendall
Of DOW JONES NEWSWIRES

WASHINGTON (Dow Jones)--President Barack Obama's first nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court could be an early test for Pennsylvania Sen. Arlen Specter as a newly minted Democrat.

Specter's announcement this week that he was switching parties after 43 years in the GOP rocked Washington and put the Democrats close to a 60-vote supermajority in the Senate.

Specter could prove a key vote in any fight over Obama's Supreme Court pick if the Republicans attempt to amount a filibuster of the president's choice to replace Justice David Souter, who is retiring.

"I would expect him to support Obama's nominee unless it's a real radical," said Roger Pilon of the Cato Institute.

Sheldon Goldman, a political-science professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, said Specter's vote could be "absolutely crucial" and predicted that the senator would be a strong backer of Obama's pick.

"Obama is in a terrific position," he said.

When it comes to Senate consideration of Supreme Court nominees, the Pennsylvania senator has perhaps the most colorful history of any current lawmaker, having angered colleagues in both parties.

"I supported very conservative nominees like Justice [Antonin] Scalia and very liberal nominees like Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg," Specter said in Philadelphia Friday. "I think that's the way it ought to be."

Specter incurred the wrath of his fellow Republicans in 1987 when he joined Democrats to vote against Reagan nominee Robert Bork, whose nomination was rejected by the Senate.

Democrats were angry with Specter in 1991 over his tough questioning of Anita Hill during dramatic confirmation hearings for Clarence Thomas.

"He behaved viciously," said American University law professor Herman Schwartz.

Specter voted for both of President Bill Clinton's Supreme Court nominees, Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer, and for both of President George W. Bush's nominees, John Roberts and Samuel Alito. Specter shepherded Roberts and Alito through the Senate Judiciary Committee, of which he was the Republican chairman.

His committee chairmanship, however, had put Republicans ill at ease, in large part because of his support for abortion rights. Specter was in line for the chairmanship after he won reelection in 2004, but he ignited a firestorm with conservatives by suggesting that a Supreme Court nominee who would overturn *Roe v. Wade* couldn't be confirmed.












Specter won the chairmanship after reassuring Republicans that he would work to confirm Bush's nominees.

Nan Aron, president of the Alliance for Justice, a liberal advocacy group that focuses on judicial nominations, said Specter's party switch means that he no longer faces the pressure of having to preserve his standing with Republicans.

"It basically frees up Specter to vote his conscience," Aron said. "That leads to a good outcome for the Democrats."

-By Brent Kendall, Dow Jones Newswires; 202-862-9222; brent.kendall@dowjones.com

[BACK TO TOP](#)

 Email
  Printer Friendly
  Order Reprints
 Share:
 








Sponsored Links

Try Colon Cleansers?

Do not Try Colon Cleansers Before Reading Our Review
ColonCleansersReport.com

"My Teeth Are Now White"

Read the trick, discovered by a mom, to turn yellow teeth white.
www.TanyasTeeth.com

"Cottage Cheese Legs?"

I Got Flawless Legs Before Summer! See What I Did And How I Did It!

Editors' Picks



Odds-On Imperfection:
Monte Carlo Tool



A Curious Treat From
Mexico



Does a Great Horse Need a
Great Name?



'X-Men' Looks Back,
Shouldn't Have



California Town Fights
Blight

WSJ.com Account:

[My Account](#)
[Subscriber Billing Info](#)

Create an Account:

[Register for Free](#)
[Subscribe Now](#)

Help & Information Center:

[Help](#)
[Customer Service](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[New on WSJ.com](#)
[Tour the new Journal](#)

About:

[News Licensing](#)
[Advertising](#)
[Conferences](#)
[About Dow Jones](#)
[Privacy Policy - Updated](#)
[Subscriber Agreement & Terms of Use - Updated](#)
[Copyright Policy](#)
[Jobs at WSJ.com](#)

WSJ.com:

[Site Map](#)
[Home](#)
[World](#)
[U.S.](#)
[Business](#)
[Markets](#)
[Market Data](#)
[Tech](#)
[Personal Finance](#)
[Life & Style](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Autos](#)
[Careers](#)
[Real Estate](#)
[Small Business](#)
[Corrections](#)

Tools & Formats:

[Today's Paper](#)
[Video Center](#)
[Graphics](#)
[Columns](#)
[Blogs](#)
[Alerts](#)
[Newsletters](#)
[Mobile](#)
[Podcasts](#)
[RSS Feeds](#)
[Journal Community](#)
[Forums](#)
[My Journal](#)

Digital Network

[WSJ.com](#)
[Marketwatch.com](#)
[Barrons.com](#)
[SmartMoney.com](#)
[AllThingsD.com](#)
[FiLife.com](#)
[BigCharts.com](#)
[Virtual Stock Exchange](#)
[WSJ U.S. Edition](#)
[WSJ Asia Edition](#)
[WSJ Europe Edition](#)
 Foreign Language Editions:
[WSJ Chinese](#)
[WSJ Portuguese](#)
[WSJ Spanish](#)

Copyright ©2009 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved