

# The Bulletin

NEWS > NATION

## Cornyn Supports Crist In Senate Race

Print Page

By **JOE MURRAY**, The Bulletin

PUBLISHED:  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2009

Florida Gov. Charlie Crist officially announced his intentions yesterday to fill the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by one-term Senator Mel Martinez, R-Fla. The announcement was warmly received by Republican leaders, but criticized by Mr. Crist's conservative opponent in the GOP primary.

"Here in Florida, we've shown that when we put people first and work together much can be accomplished, and I intend to bring that same approach to Washington," Mr. Crist said in a statement announcing his decision. "That is why, after thoughtful consideration with my wife, Carole, I have decided to run for the U.S. Senate."

Mr. Crist pledged to tackle the issues that have dominated newspaper headlines. The economy, taxes, health care reform, the environment and national security were all included in his list of top priorities.

"The answers to these questions will have a lasting impact on the country we love and the nation we will leave to our children and grandchildren," Mr. Crist said.

Republicans in the Senate welcomed the announcement. Mr. Crist's decision to forgo a second term as the Sunshine State's governor and run for the senate, increased chances the GOP would retain open seat.

"I am pleased today to endorse Gov. Charlie Crist for the United States Senate," said U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and head of the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

Since the election of President Barack Obama, Republicans have struggled to bring new ideas and fresh faces to the party's center stage. Many inside the Beltway hope Mr. Crist's candidacy would be a new start for the embattled party.

"With his record of reform in Florida, I know that Gov. Crist will bring a fresh perspective to Washington in our efforts to fight for lower taxes, less government and new job creation for all Americans," Mr. Cornyn said. "Charlie Crist is a tireless advocate on behalf of all Floridians and one of only three governors who earned an 'A' from the CATO institute for his efforts to restrain spending and cut taxes last year."

But Mr. Crist's announcement and the GOP's instant endorsement did not sit well with at least one Republican — Marco Rubio, the former Florida House speaker who is also running for Mr. Martinez's Senate seat.

"I can't stand by and watch President Obama, Democrats, and too many Republicans blow holes in the budget and leave the messy debt to our children and grandchildren," Mr. Rubio said in an e-mail sent to supporters yesterday.

Mr. Rubio also released a new Web video comparing Mr. Crist to Mr. Obama.

“Some politicians support trillions in reckless spending,” the ad’s narrator says as pictures of Mr. Obama and Mr. Crist is shown. “Borrowed money from China and the Middle East, mountains of debt for our children, and a terrible threat to a fragile economy. Today, too many politicians embrace Washington’s same old broken ways.”

Mr. Cornyn, however, disagreed.

“While I believe Marco Rubio has a very bright future within the Republican Party, Charlie Crist is the best candidate in 2010 to ensure that we maintain the checks and balances that Floridians deserve in the United States Senate,” he said. “Gov. Crist is a dedicated public servant and a dynamic leader, and the National Republican Senatorial Committee will provide our full support to ensure that he is elected the next United States Senator from Florida.”

Mr. Crist was one of the many governors who accepted funds from the \$787 billion stimulus package that passed earlier in the year. The stimulus became a symbol of liberal gluttony and a rallying cry for conservatives.

But in the months since the budget battles showed hints of GOP unity, division between party moderates and conservatives began to surface. The same is happening in the Florida GOP Senate primary. Democrats added fuel to the fire by suggesting Senate Republicans were trying to muscle out conservative candidates. Pennsylvania’s Senate candidate, Pat Toomey, was Exhibit A.

“After saying the NRSC wouldn’t be endorsing anyone in the Pennsylvania Senate Republican primary despite the fact that Pat Toomey is the only major declared candidate, John Cornyn apparently changed his mind today and endorsed Charlie Crist in the Florida Senate race despite the contested primary with Marco Rubio,” DNC spokesperson Hari Sevugan said in an e-mail to the press. “Which begs the question — now that Cornyn is no longer as reliant on primary voters to determine who he should back, should we now be expecting a NRSC endorsement of Pat Toomey?”

Mr. Crist fired back yesterday and argued his willingness to find common ground should not be viewed as an indictment of his conservative credentials. He also suggested there was no ideological rift in the Florida GOP.

“I think what’s important to bear in mind is that we do things a little bit differently here in Florida and that’s another reason that I am running for the United States Senate,” Mr. Crist said at a press conference. “We work together to solve problems and do what’s right for the people of our state. The people are the boss. And I think, regardless of party, we have to work together to get things done. And that’s what I’d like to take to Washington, D.C.”

A recent poll conducted by Rasmussen Reports shows Mr. Crist with a solid advantage in his bid for the Senate. Fifty-seven percent of the state’s likely voters responded they are “somewhat likely” to vote for the popular governor. Twenty-three percent said they were “very likely” to cast the vote.

*Joe Murray can be reached at [jmurray@thebulletin.us](mailto:jmurray@thebulletin.us)*

Copyright © 2009 - The Bulletin

[x] Close Window