

America's Longest-Serving Governor (Ever) Is About to Resign

Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad, the longest-serving governor in American history, will resign from his office Wednesday in order to become the next U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of China.

The sixth-term Republican is a personal friend of Chinese President Xi Jinping, a relationship that was forged over the course of the past 30-plus years. Xi has visited Iowa numerous times as part of an effort to improve grain trade between his country and the U.S.

Branstad's nomination confirmation vote had been delayed by Democrats until Monday evening. But, the final vote was never really in doubt. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and 12 of his fellow Democrats were the only "no" votes.

However, there are several potential 2020 presidential candidates in their ranks, including:

- Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis.
- Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J.
- Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Mass.
- Sen. Tammy Duckworth, .
- Sen. Kirstin Gillibrand, D-N.Y.
- Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich.
- Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.
- Sen. Elizabeth Warren, .

The only excuse for voting against Branstad—who is immensely popular in Iowa, the first state in the presidential nomination process—is purely political, to attempt to obstruct President Donald Trump's agenda. The governor never lost an

election in Iowa, having gone up in statewide votes in the Hawkeye State eight times in his political career.

Iowa doesn't have term limits; he retired in 1999 to start a Des Moines law firm and later served as president of Des Moines University. He returned for the 2010 election, defeating The Family Leader President Bob Vander Plaats in the primary by 10 points and then-incumbent Gov. Chet Culver by nearly 10 points in the general election.

Branstad ran for re-election in 2014, winning 98 out of 99 counties en route to a 22-point win that paved the way for Republicans to take control of both chambers of the General Assembly in 2016. His running mate for the last two elections, Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds, will become governor upon his resignation—the first woman to hold that office.

But there's confusion over whether or not Reynolds will be allowed to appoint a successor lieutenant governor. The Iowa Constitution has been amended a number of times to change the duties of lieutenant governor—stripping away the role of presiding officer of the Senate—but the legislature has given the governor the authority to make necessary appointments.

As Branstad's right-hand woman, Reynolds was responsible for economic development and STEM education efforts in the state. She has indicated to the Iowa media that she has decided on whether or not to appoint a successor lieutenant governor, but has not said what her decision is.

Attorney General Tom Miller previously said the lieutenant governor has the ability to appoint a successor upon becoming the new governor, but made an abrupt about-face last month. If Reynolds makes an appointment, it will likely lead to a lawsuit.

The next gubernatorial election in Iowa is in 2018. {eo}