

Harry Reid to Retire After 2016

U.S. Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid said on Friday he will not seek re-election next year, leaving Congress after 30 years and complicating Democrats' efforts to retake control of the Senate in 2016.

Reid, who represents Nevada, said in a video message his decision to retire was not due to a recent exercise accident or his party's loss of control of the chamber in the November congressional elections.

"The job of minority leader of the United States Senate is just as important as being the majority leader," Reid, 75, said in the video, posted to YouTube. "It gives you so much opportunity to do good things for this country. And that's what I am focused on."

Reid, a former amateur boxer who represented Nevada in the Senate and House of Representatives, peppered his farewell message with sports metaphors, and vowed to keep fighting for his party in his remaining 22 months in office.

In January, an accident while exercising left him with broken ribs and facial bones. Despite surgery, he said soon afterward that his 2016 re-election plans were "off and running."

On Friday, Reid said while it had nothing to do with his decision to leave, the accident gave him time to ponder Democrats' future.

"We have to make sure that the Democrats take control of the Senate again," he said in the video, adding re-election resources can now be used instead on other Senate Democrats.

The Democrats hold 44 seats in the Senate. Republicans hold 54

seats and independents two.

However, Reid's decision could complicate Democrats' efforts to retake control of the U.S. Senate in 2016 elections. He had a tough re-election fight in 2010.

Democrats who might seek to replace Reid as their party leader in the Senate could include Illinois Senator Dick Durbin New York Senator Chuck Schumer, who currently hold the No. 2 and No. 3 leadership positions. Other senior Democrats, such as Senator Patty Murray of Washington, could also be in contention.

"He's so respected by our caucus for his strength, his legislative acumen, his honesty and his determination," Schumer said in a statement.

Reid won the job of majority leader in 2007, serving as Democratic President Barack Obama's point man in the Senate, helping to secure congressional passage of Obama's 2010 signature healthcare law despite fierce Republican opposition.

His leadership was re-examined after Democrats lost the Senate. Senate Democrats voted in January to keep Reid as their leader but some voiced frustration at his tactics and Senate gridlock. The party expanded the leadership to include Senator Elizabeth Warren to bolster its appeal to liberals and the middle class.

Reid Friday warned Republicans, including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, that he did not intend to spend his remaining time quietly: "My friend Senator McConnell, don't be too elated."

The two have faced strained relations, causing major legislation to languish as they traded blame. In 2012, McConnell called Reid "the worst leader in the Senate ever."