

Senator on the Bubble: 'I Cannot and Will Not' Support Trump

U.S. Sen. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.), considered by most experts to be the most-endangered Republican incumbent seeking re-election in 2016, announced Tuesday night he was joining #NeverTrump.

In an official statement, he said has spent his life "building bridges and tearing down barriers—not building walls." He said that's why he could not tolerate GOP presidential nominee-in-waiting Donald Trump's comments about the judge in the Trump University lawsuit.

"I find Donald Trump's belief that an American-born judge of Mexican descent is incapable of fairly presiding over his case is not only dead wrong, it is un-American," he said. "As the presidential campaign progressed, I was hoping the rhetoric would tone down and reflect a campaign that was inclusive, thoughtful and principled.

"While I oppose the Democratic nominee, Donald Trump's latest statements, in context with past attacks on Hispanics, women and the disabled like me make it certain that I cannot and will not support my party's nominee for president regardless of the political impact on my candidacy or the Republican Party.

"It is absolutely essential that we are guided by a commander-in-chief with a responsible and proper temperament, discretion and judgment. Our president must be fit to command the most powerful military the world has ever seen, including an arsenal of thousands of nuclear weapons.

"After much consideration, I have concluded that Donald Trump has not demonstrated the temperament necessary to assume the

greatest office in the world.”

His statement came out within minutes of a lengthy statement Trump himself made regarding the matter, which the presidential contender said would be his last comments on the issue. It’s unclear if the two were in any way related.

Kirk wasn’t alone in expressing his frustration with Trump’s comments, but he was far from the extreme among Republicans. In Iowa, state Sen. David Johnson (R-Ocheyedan), who is in the midst of his third term in the Senate, reportedly “suspended” his GOP affiliation, officially changing his voter registration to “No Party” affiliation, the state’s politically independent designation.

Johnson, who does not face re-election until 2018, is one of the most senior members of the Iowa General Assembly, having served 18 years in the legislature. He remains a member of the Senate Republican Caucus—at least for now—but left open the possibility of leaving the party entirely.

“I will not stand silent if the party of Lincoln and the end of slavery buckles under the racial bias of a bigot,” he told The Des Moines Register newspaper. “Mark me down as Never Trump.”

Johnson supported former Texas Gov. Rick Perry until he dropped out of the race, then backed former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina in the first-in-the-nation Iowa Caucus.

“If Mr. Trump is the nominee, he becomes the standard bearer for a party that’s on the verge of breaking apart,” he said. “He simply cannot unify the GOP. If there is a profound split, I’ll gladly re-join Republicans who are dedicated to equality and justice for all, and let Mr. Trump lead his supporters over the cliff.”

The Iowa GOP said it did not have any comment regarding Johnson’s announcement.