

This Popular Conservative Just Dropped His Bid for a GOP Leadership Role

It took less than a week, but an effort to place the popular, but anti-establishment, U.S. Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) in a leadership position in the Senate Republican Conference has ended in failure.

Last Monday, the *Washington Examiner* reported Lee was interested in running for the position of Senate Republican Policy Committee chairman. That's effectively the No. 4 position within the Senate GOP hierarchy.

Lee has been in the Senate since 2010, and is expected to cruise to a second six-year term in November. He's been a key ally of Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and was a significant thorn in the side of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) early in his first term.

But more recently—particularly since Republicans regained control of the Senate—he's worked more closely with leadership, even serving as a “counselor” to McConnell.

Last Tuesday, Lee told the *Examiner* he was interested in the policy position because he believed it would be opening up, based on his understanding of SRC rules, which limits the length of time committee chairs may serve. Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) is currently the Policy Committee chair.

“I saw a seat opening up and I'm interested in policy and naturally I'm interested in anything to promote an active, lively discussion among members of the Senate Republican conference,” he told the newspaper. “This position involves promoting an active, robust, lively discussion among Republican senators about policy issues. It involves preparing

white papers, providing members with research, so you can discuss these issues in an open forum and you can help members make decisions that benefit them and their constituents.”

But it appears the position isn't open. Barrasso and two other senators accepted leadership positions when their predecessors resigned mid-term. They accepted the positions with the understanding the additional two years wouldn't count toward the term limitation.

Politico reported Monday that based on that new information, and a lack of support among fellow Republicans, Lee was ending his bid for the position. It noted the time may soon be approaching, however, when the Senate Old Guard is going to have to give way somewhat to the next generation of GOP leaders.

The average length of service for the Republicans in the Senate is just over nine and a half years. But of the 10 longest-serving Republican senators, the average soars to nearly 29 years.