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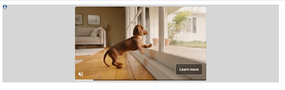
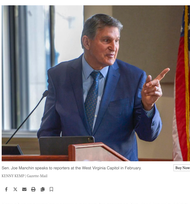


Manchin switches registration, says he's 'committed to put country before party'

By Ty McClung tmcclung@hdmediallc.com May 31, 2024 2 min to read



Sen. Joe Manchin speaks to reporters at the West Virginia Capitol in February. Buy Now

KENNY KEMP | Gazette-Mail

Days after announcing he would not run for governor, Sen. Joe Manchin, I-WVa., announced on Friday that he registered as an independent at the West Virginia Statehouse.

Manchin announced the switch in a Facebook post to his followers.

In a statement, Manchin said that he is "focused on doing what's best for my state and my country, without regard to party or politics."

"Since becoming a United States Senator in 2010, I have seen both the Democratic and Republican parties leave West Virginians and our country behind for partisan extremism while jeopardizing our democracy. To stay true to myself and remain committed to put country before party, I have decided to register as an independent with no party affiliation and continue to fight for America's sensible majority."

Manchin's switch of party registration opens the door for him to potentially run for office again in the upcoming election cycle.

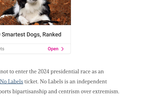
Samuel Workman, a political science professor at West Virginia University and director of the WVU Institute for Policy Research and Public Affairs, said Manchin has several options.

"This positions him for his future career, whatever that is," Workman said. "Or it sets him up to run for office in a different party context."

Workman said Manchin's decision could shake up the format of multiple races this November.

"This is meaningful, in terms of how the [Democratic National Committee] and the [Republican National Committee] spend resources. With no Manchin in the race, the RNC probably spends slightly less money [in West Virginia]. That money can go to states like Ohio, Montana, Pennsylvania and other battleground states. With Manchin in the race, the RNC has to spend more money here because of his popularity and the uncertainty of how the electorates may react."

Not an unexpected move



In February, Manchin decided not to enter the 2024 presidential race as an independent candidate on the No Labels ticket. No Labels is an independent political action group that supports bipartisanship and centrism over extremism.

Manchin is not the first Democratic senator to switch registration to an independent, as late Sen. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., registered as an independent in 2006 before continuing to serve in the Senate from 2007 to 2013.

Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, I-Ariz., Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, and Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., also have left the Democratic Party in recent years, although they all still caucus with Senate Democrats.

Reaction mixed

The West Virginia Democratic Party released a statement from state Delegate Mike Pushkin, D-Kanawha, saying, "Clearly the Senator thinks his new role as the head of Americans Together ... can best be served in the final eight months of his term as an independent."

Pushkin went on to thank Manchin for his endorsement of Steve Williams as the Democratic Party's nominee for governor and for his role in creating the Jan. 6th Commission, saying, "While the Senator has been one of the most independent senators in the country, and has sometimes opposed the Democratic agenda, we'll always be grateful for his votes to impeach President [Donald] Trump."

Sen. Mike Caputo, D-Marion said, "I don't know that I'm totally surprised [about the move] ... but the timeline is kind of questionable if he is having some desire to seek the governorship or something like that."

Caputo, who has been Manchin's throughout his career, said he doesn't think an independent can win in West Virginia and he believes in the two-party system. But, if an independent could win, he thinks Manchin would benefit from his bipartisan connections and campaigning history.

"I think people are sick of partisan politics, but I don't know if switching to a no-party affiliate will be the answer they're looking for," Caputo said, "but if anybody could pull this off, it would certainly be Joe."

If Manchin does decide to run, he must file to do so by Aug. 1.

By McClung is a news reporter. He can be reached at 304-348-3058 or **tmcclung@hdmediallc.com**.

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My commitment to do everything I can to bring our country together has led me to register as an independent with no party affiliation.

Tags: Joe Manchin III Democrat Republican Independents Senator Politics

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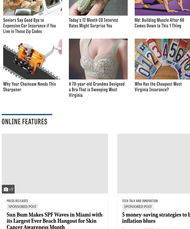

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