

Former U.S. Presidential Nominee Mitt Romney Working On Sports Betting Bill

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Republican Senator Mitt Romney of Utah is collaborating with Democratic Senator Charles Schumer, the Senate minority leader, on a bill to establish federal guidelines for sports betting, according to sources.

Schumer and former Republican Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah introduced a similar bill in December 2018, known as the Sports Wagering Market Integrity Act.

The Schumer-Hatch bill would have included the requirement for sports books to purchase [official data](#) collected by the nation's major sports leagues through the end of 2024.

The Sports Wagering Market Integrity Act expired with the end of the congressional session in 2018, and Schumer has not re-introduced the legislation in the new session, which began this year.

Schumer reportedly has been looking for a Republican co-sponsor in the wake of Hatch's retirement at the end of 2018.

Romney, 72, won the race to succeed Hatch during last November's election in Utah and would seem be a logical choice to replace his predecessor as the Republican co-sponsor of Schumer's bill.

"Like the previous iteration introduced by Orrin Hatch and Charles Schumer, this bill likely has little chance of passing," said [John Holden](#), an assistant professor of business at Oklahoma State University who writes about the gambling industry.

"Official data mandates run the risk of creating a property right in something where courts have never found one to exist before," Holden said.

"While there are certainly some aspects that the federal government may do well in the regulation of sports gambling, such a mandate is likely to draw the ire of those states that have already passed a bill."

Media personnel for Romney and Schumer did not respond to calls and emails requesting comment on Thursday.

A frequent critic of President Donald Trump, Romney's participation in a bill to restrict sports betting potentially could shore up his support among conservatives in Utah, which is one of only two states without any form of legalized gambling. The other is Hawaii.

Romney, who also spent two stints leading Bain Capital, left the Boston-based private investment firm to take over leadership of the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City in the aftermath of a bribery scandal that exposed widespread corruption of the International Olympic Committee.

Schumer's motivation can be linked to the [sports leagues](#), almost all of whom are headquartered in New York City.

In 2012, Romney won the Republican presidential nomination and unsuccessfully challenged President Barack Obama in his campaign for re-election.

A Mormon, Romney's record on gambling as [governor of Massachusetts](#) from 2003 to 2007 showed a political pragmatism that was not always consistent.

In another sports betting development on Wednesday, Republican Congressman James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin announced he would not run for re-election in 2020.

Sensenbrenner, 76, was chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security and Investigations in September 2018 during a [controversial hearing](#) on sports betting.

Democrats and Republicans on the subcommittee said Congress not only has the authority but obligation to provide federal oversight of sports betting.

"I think the one thing that all of you agree on is that for Congress to do nothing is the worst possible alternative," Sensenbrenner told witnesses at the conclusion of the hearing.

Those witnesses included Becky Harris, who was chair of the Nevada Gaming Control Board, and Sara Slane, who was senior vice president of public affairs for the American Gaming Association.

Sensenbrenner ignored the testimony of both Harris and Slane, who implored the committee not to interfere with the regulation of sports betting by states and warned federal regulation could be counterproductive.

The hearing caused a stir in the gaming industry, but when Democrats regained majority control of the House in November, Sensenbrenner lost his chairmanship and the threat of federal regulation of sports betting was averted — at least temporarily.

Elected to the House in 1978, Sensenbrenner is the second most senior member of the House behind Republican Don Young of Alaska, who was elected in 1972.

Doug Collins of Georgia, the ranking Republican on the House Judiciary Committee, released a statement on Thursday praising Sensenbrenner's legacy.

"His contributions will always be a part of our committee's history," Collins said.

But in an August 2005 article in Rolling Stone, journalist Matt Taibbi took a different view.

"Sensenbrenner is your basic Fat Evil Prick, perfectly cast as a dictatorial committee chairman. He has the requisite moist-with-sweat pink neck, the dour expression, the penchant for pointless bile and vengefulness," Taibbi wrote.

Sensenbrenner joins an unusually large number of Republicans in the House this year who have announced they will not seek re-election.

"Being a minority in the House - there's just no reason to come to work...It's miserable," Danielle Pletka of the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank, said Sunday on Meet The Press.

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