



MCCONNELL SAYS HE'D SUPPORT TRUMP IF HE WINS 2024 NOMINATION

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Less than a month after excoriating Donald Trump in a blistering floor speech, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said Thursday that he would “absolutely” support the former president again if he secured the Republican nomination in 2024.

The Kentucky Republican told Fox News that there’s still “a lot to happen between now” and the next presidential election.

“I’ve got at least four members that I think are planning on running for president, plus governors and others,” McConnell said. “There’s no incumbent. Should be a wide open race.”

But when directly asked if he would support Trump again were he to win the nomination, McConnell responded: “The nominee of the party? Absolutely.”

McConnell’s remarks underscore an awkward balancing act he sought to maintain since Trump lost the election, reflecting the reality that McConnell’s own path back to power in the Senate hinges on enthusiasm from a party base that still ardently supports Trump.

McConnell’s comments precede an annual gathering of conservative activists that this year is expected to showcase Trump’s vise-grip hold on the GOP base.

Trump, along with most other leading 2024 presidential prospects, is set to address the Conservative Political Action Conference, which will be held in Orlando this year because of coronavirus restrictions. McConnell, a regular at the annual conference, will not be on the program following his condemnation of Trump.

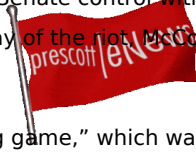
Shortly after voting to acquit Trump at his second impeachment trial, McConnell delivered a scalding denunciation of Trump from the Senate floor, calling him “morally responsible” for the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. In turn, an angry Trump blistered McConnell as a “dour, sullen and unsmiling political hack.”

The 36-year Senate veteran had an expedient relationship with Trump while he was in office. He made a habit of saying little about many of Trump’s outrageous comments.

But together they secured key Senate victories, such as the 2017 tax cuts and the confirmations of three Supreme Court justices and more than 200 other federal judges.

Their relationship soured after Trump’s denial of his Nov. 3 defeat and relentless efforts to reverse the voters’ verdict with his baseless claims that Democrats fraudulently stole the election.

It deteriorated further last month, after Republicans lost Senate control with two Georgia runoff defeats they blamed on Trump, followed by the attack on the Capitol by Trump supporters. The day of the riot, McConnell railed against “thugs, mobs, or threats” and described the attack as “this failed insurrection.”



Still, McConnell likes to pride himself on playing the “long game,” which was the title of his 2016 memoir. And his comments on Thursday may yet prove prescient.

Recently, Republican Sen. Mitt Romney of Utah, a longtime Trump opponent, predicted the former president would win the nomination if he ran again.

“I don’t know if he’ll run in 2024 or not, but if he does, I’m pretty sure he will win the nomination,” Romney said during an online forum hosted by The New York Times.