

***By Jan Schultz, The Imperial Republican News Editor***

Were you surprised by Nebraska Sen. Ben Nelson's announcement Tuesday that he wasn't going to seek re-election to a third term in the U.S. Senate?

As the news hit the web, it was difficult not to wonder further how this new twist will affect the 2012 Election.

As you can read elsewhere on this page, a vast majority have already had enough of the campaign ahead because of all the focus on the Presidential race.

However, Nelson's departure from the upcoming race has national overtones, so election news will only intensify here.

His decision puts Nebraska's Democratic Senate seat in jeopardy, as he represents the seventh Senate Democrat to announce retirement so far. It's going to be tough for the Democrats to hold onto their 53-47 majority.

There is one unknown who's filed for the Democratic Senate nomination so far in Nebraska, but well-known popular Democratic candidates in this heavily Republican state are hard to come by.

Nelson's departure will certainly shake up the Republican race, too.

Will Gov. Heineman now jump into the race? If so, what's that going to do to Jon Bruning's campaign for the Republican nomination?

Nelson's delay in announcing his plans until now certainly lent fodder to the fire as Nebraskans and national observers opined what he was going to do.

He may have given a Republican opponent a run for his or her money in the 2012 race, but many in Nebraska have not forgotten his crucial vote in support of President Obama's health-care legislation two years ago.

Even being a native of McCook just 60 miles down the road, Nelson's support has dwindled.

He made the right decision to sit this one out, "spend more time with his family and look for new ways to serve the state and nation," as he wrote in his press release.

"It's time to move on," he said in his statement Tuesday.

While I've had differences with Nelson the past few years, I fully agree with this statement he made in his announcement Tuesday:

"I encourage those who will follow in my footsteps to look for common ground and to work together in bipartisan ways to do what's best for the country, not just one political party."

Republican or Democrat, that's in short supply these days in Washington.