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Senator Dick Durbin to retire; sparking leadership and

Senate race



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Washington, April 23, 2025— Senator Dick Durbin, the longtime second-ranking Democrat in the U.S. Senate, announced on Wednesday that he will not seek reelection at the end of his current term, marking the close of an influential political career spanning nearly three decades.

Durbin, 80, has served as Senate Democratic Whip since 2005 and as U.S. Senator from Illinois since 1996. “I truly love the job...but in my heart, I know it’s time to pass the torch,” he stated, describing the decision as a difficult but necessary one.

His retirement sets off a major succession race in both Illinois and the Senate Democratic leadership. Durbin is now the fourth Senate Democrat to forgo reelection in 2026.

Within the Senate, his departure opens up key leadership roles, particularly on the Judiciary Committee, where he presided over landmark hearings such as the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. He has also been a prominent advocate for immigration reform, especially in support of Dreamers.

Illinois Democrats had been anticipating the announcement, with several preparing potential campaigns. Likely contenders include U.S. Reps. Raja Krishnamoorthi, Robin Kelly, and Lauren Underwood, as well as Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton. A competitive Democratic primary is expected in the deep-blue state.

In the Senate, a leadership shuffle is also expected. Senators Amy Klobuchar, Patty Murray, and Brian Schatz are among those seen as potential successors to Durbin as Whip.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer lauded Durbin as “a trusted partner, one of the most respected voices in the Senate, my dear friend, and, of course, my former roommate.”

Durbin’s exit marks a pivotal transition moment for the Democratic caucus.