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## Political Clock Ticks for Giffords

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Roll Call Staff

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The Arizona candidate filing deadline is one year from today, but political insiders in the state expect to hear whether Rep. [Gabrielle Giffords](#) (D) will be running again for federal office much earlier than that.

Her Democratic colleagues in Congress are raising money for Giffords so she can run for whatever office she chooses. Sen. [Mark Udall](#) (Colo.) and Reps. [Rosa DeLauro](#) (Conn.) and [Adam Smith](#) (Wash.) have headlined or hosted fundraisers in recent days.

But no one from either party in Washington, D.C., or Arizona who spoke with Roll Call said they think Giffords will run for the state's open Senate seat, a campaign that she had been planning before being wounded by a gunman at a constituent outreach event in January.

"In terms of Senate, Democrats like myself hope and pray that the Congresswoman gets well and miraculously steps forward and announces her campaign for Senate. But I'm not holding my breath for that," Phoenix-based Democratic strategist [Mario Diaz](#) said. "My understanding is that she's going to run for re-election."

He added that if Giffords were to run for Senate, that decision would need to be made by midsummer, so she or another Democrat could begin raising the \$6 million likely needed to compete with Rep. [Jeff Flake](#) or whoever emerges from the GOP primary. Giffords has more time to decide whether she plans to run for re-election, Diaz said.

In Giffords' absence, as she recovers from a traumatic brain injury at a Houston rehabilitation center, insiders said the Giffords Congressional and campaign staff are keeping the two separate offices running smoothly. But the uncertainty surrounding her future plans has frozen the political situation of the district.

"I just don't think Democrats can do anything until she makes a decision or they make a decision for her," one plugged-in Republican said. "But the Republicans are almost as frozen. People clearly want to run, but they're going to have to rethink it if she decides to run."

Beyond Giffords' health, redistricting is another major factor keeping candidates from launching campaigns. Arizona has an independent commission redrawing the Congressional lines, and even party insiders said they have no idea what the new map will look like.

One Republican reconsidering his options is Giffords' 2010 opponent, [Jesse Kelly](#), who filed to run in early January and had a six-figure fundraiser scheduled for the weekend after Giffords was shot. But that event was quickly canceled, and Kelly went on to raise just \$25 in the first quarter.

"There are other Republicans interested in running, but until the new districts are drawn and Giffords makes a decision, I believe that everybody seems to be in a holding pattern," said [Adam Kwasmann](#), Kelly's former campaign manager, who just filed to run for a state House seat in Tucson.

Another Republican who multiple insiders said was looking at the race is state Sen. [Frank Antenori](#), a conservative who lost in the 2006 8th district primary.

Giffords raised \$358,000 in the first quarter, a number boosted by contributions from her colleagues. Several House Democrats, including Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#) (Calif.), Minority Whip [Steny Hoyer](#) (Md.), Assistant Minority Leader [James Clyburn](#) (S.C.) and Democratic National Committee Chairwoman [Debbie Wasserman Schultz](#) (Fla), donated the maximum \$2,000 allowed per election for campaign-to-campaign contributions.

Udall headlined two mid-May fundraisers in Arizona, and DeLauro hosted a fundraiser at her Capitol Hill home Tuesday night. Smith, ranking member on the Armed Services Committee, headlined a defense industry breakfast Wednesday at the Capitol Hill restaurant [Sonoma](#).

"I want to do all I can to support her recovery," Udall said. He is a Tucson native, was born at the same hospital as Giffords and wears a rubber bracelet with a heart and peace sign in honor of the Arizona Congresswoman.

"Those of us who think she has a real role — if she would like to — serving in the Congress want to keep her options open. Part of keeping those options open is about making sure she has the money to run a strong campaign if she decides to run for re-election," he said.

DeLauro said her fundraiser, a "women's cocktail reception," according to an invitation, was not out of the ordinary. "I did one for Gabby last year, too. Gabby's a very close friend, and I wanted to help her out any way I can," she said.

Republican insiders said Giffords would be tough to beat if she runs for re-election, but one Tucson Republican said she will likely need to at least make public appearances at some point so voters are assured she will be able to serve in the next Congress.

"As much sympathy as there is for her, they want to have a Representative," he said. "If she's not going to cast a vote in this Congress and it's unclear if she can in the next Congress, people aren't going to want to vote for that."

Another Republican said Democrats would be wise to hold off on a Giffords announcement until late spring next year, so Republicans would get a late start on fundraising.



Tom Williams/Roll Call

Rep. [Rosa DeLauro](#) (seen above at a Tuesday hearing) hosted a fundraiser this week at her Capitol Hill home for Rep. [Gabrielle Giffords](#).

A Democratic source in Tucson said constituents in the district have been very understanding as Giffords recovers from her injury. "People are respectful and deferential," the source said. "They understand we have a Member of Congress who was severely injured in the line of duty."

A federal judge ruled Wednesday that Jared Loughner, the 22-year-old suspect accused of shooting Giffords in a rampage that killed six people, is not mentally competent to stand trial.

Udall visited Giffords two weeks ago in Houston and said he is following the approach of her family, which is sharing her progress with the public while respecting her privacy.

"She's made a miraculous recovery so far," Udall said. "She has a good ways to go, but the doctors continue to be very optimistic."

*Emily Heil contributed to this article.*

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