

# OPINION

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THE ADVOCATE-MESSENGER  
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## McConnell should stay in Senate

On the campaign trail, U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell likes to "tout his clout," as we pointed out in a report about one of his recent visits to Danville. That's a familiar tune from most any incumbent in Congress, but it's one McConnell can sing more loudly than just about anyone.

Kentucky would be giving up something terribly important on today's political scene if it lost McConnell. First elected in 1984, the state's senior senator has risen to the rank of Senate minority leader. He served as majority whip from 2002-2006, and had the Democrats not taken over the Senate in the last election, it would be McConnell instead of Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., leading the majority.

Still, McConnell's power and influence cannot be minimized, as has been evident during this weekend's work in Congress to come up with a bailout package to revive the economy, and as is evident during every major debate on Capitol Hill.

McConnell is an able negotiator, an articulate spokesman for his state and his party. He is a member of the powerful Appropriations Committee,

### EDITORIAL

which has helped him bring tens of millions of dollars to Kentucky, the Select Committee on Intelligence, and numerous other subcommittees that allow him more than just a little influence on issues that are important to this state.

This time McConnell is being challenged by Bruce Lunsford, an accountant, attorney and former health care executive and partner in Vencor, a company he helped form and which owned dozens of hospitals and nursing homes. He has also dabbled in horse racing and motion picture production.

Lunsford has some background in government, having served as head of Kentucky's first Commerce Cabinet in 1980 under Gov. John Y. Brown Jr., but has never been elected to public office.

But he's no match for McConnell, and now more than ever the state and the country — facing threats foreign and domestic, fiscal and fanatical — need strong, experienced, knowledgeable leadership. We don't need a freshman senator.