

Mitch Daniels Statement

January 31, 2023

After what I hope was adequate reflection, I've decided not to become a candidate for the U.S. Senate. With full credit and respect for the institution and those serving in it, I conclude that it's just not the job for me, not the town for me, and not the life I want to live at this point.

I have often expressed a preference for the citizen servant approach to public life. I believe that politics and government are worthy pursuits, which men and women of good will should undertake if they can, not as a life's work or an end in itself, but to try to ensure that the important realms of society – the private economy, our voluntary associations, local communities and neighborhoods, and especially families – can all flourish.

I've likewise tried to keep in mind President Reagan's observation that some people seek public office to be something, others to do something. My one tour of duty in elected office involved, like those in business before and academe after it, an action job, with at least the chance to do useful things every day. I have never imagined that I would be well-suited to legislative office, particularly where seniority remains a significant factor in one's effectiveness, and I saw nothing in my recent explorations that altered that view.

Had I chosen to compete, given my age, I would have done so on an explicitly one-term basis. I would have returned any unspent campaign funds to their donors, closed any political accounts, and devoted six years to causes I think critical to the long-term safety and prosperity of our country.

These issues include saving the safety net programs, so that we can keep promises we have made to older and vulnerable Americans and avoid a terrible national crisis of confidence and betrayal; in so doing, to avoid crushing our economy and today's younger citizens with the unpayable debts we are on course to leave them; to confront firmly the aggression of a would-be superpower who holds in contempt the values of personal freedom and individual dignity central to our national success and our view of a just society; to secure our borders without depriving the nation of the talent and energy that grateful immigrants can bring.

And I would have tried to work on these matters in a way that might soften the harshness and personal vitriol that has infected our public square, rendering it not only repulsive to millions of Americans, but also less capable of effective action to meet our threats and seize our opportunities.

Maybe I can find ways to contribute that do not involve holding elective office. If not, there is so much more to life. People obsessed with politics or driven by personal ambition sometimes have difficulty understanding those who are neither. I hope to be understood as a citizen and patriot who thought seriously, but not tediously, about how to be deserving of those labels and simply decided the U.S. Senate was not the only way.