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Andrews expected to announce he's seeking his congressional seat

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Reversing his oft-stated pledge not to seek re-election to Congress, Rep. Rob Andrews is expected to announce Thursday that he is willing to run after all.

People familiar with the congressman's plans says the 51-year-old Andrews will announce his intention to seek a 10th term on Thursday. Sources requested anonymity because an official announcement has not been made yet.

Sources said Andrews made calls Wednesday to key political leaders in Burlington, Gloucester and Camden counties and some state officials informing them of his decision.

His wife, Camille, jumped in at the last moment to take his place in the House race, promising that she would step aside later if asked to by party leaders.

Andrews foreswore any interest in returning to the House when he announced last spring that he was challenging his own party's incumbent U.S. Senator, Frank Lautenberg, in the Democratic primary in June.

Andrews said repeatedly after his loss to Lautenberg, that he would not "under any circumstances" be returning to represent the First District.

Camille Andrews, who easily won the Democratic nomination in June, has written to New Jersey's Secretary of State, announcing her withdrawal from the ballot.

Democrats in the district have until Sept. 17 to fill the vacancy.

They will do so Monday at a meeting of county committee members convened for that purpose.

Under state law, vacancies are to be filled by vote of county committee members in the district at a meeting at which a majority of those members are present.

There are more than 600 county committee members from the towns in the district, which covers parts of Camden, Gloucester and Burlington Counties.

A number of elected officials in the district expressed an interest in replacing Andrews, but they coalesced behind the congressman after his defeat at Lautenberg's hands and said they hoped he would reconsider and run.

Andrews had considered several opportunities in the private sector, including discussions with Goldman Sachs.

George Norcross, former Camden County Democratic chairman, has said that he will support whatever decision Andrews makes.

The Republican candidate for the seat, Dale Glading said if Rob Andrews decides to get back into the race, he'll be breaking a promise to residents in his district.

"A man's word should be his bond and Rob should be ashamed of himself for breaking his promise not to re-enter the race," said Glading, a 47-year-old Barrington resident who directs a prison ministry.

The district, which is dominated by the city of Camden and the suburbs along the White Horse and Black Horse Pikes, is overwhelmingly Democratic and has returned Andrews to office time after time by lopsided margins.

Andrews' decision may not play well outside the district, however.

Ingrid Reed, a policy analyst at Rutgers' Eagleton Institute of Politics, said last month that Andrews getting back into the race would constitute "a quintessential New Jersey situation, in which a politician breaks his word."

The provision in law for replacing nominees, Reid said, is designed as a "fail safe," to be invoked for emergencies such as heart attacks.

"In this case it looks as if there's been an arrangement," Reid said. "She resigns and the party gets to use that fail-safe system."

"Some will take Rob to task for going back on his promise not to run for re-election," said Steven Goldstein, chair of Garden State Equality, a gay-rights organization. "But we believe another promise is just as important: The promise of equality for all Americans, for which Rob Andrews has been an all-time champion. We look forward to working with him in Congress for many years to come."

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