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U.S. SEN. Mitch McConnell talks with the media after filing his papers for re-election Wednesday in the Secretary of State's office.

Senator emphasizes clout with seniority

By CHARLES WOLFE
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U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell, a Republican needing Democratic votes, emphasized the clout that comes with seniority.

He said Wednesday it had helped him "take some of the rough edges off of the Republican revolution" when it conflicted with Kentucky's interests.

With two terms under his belt, McConnell said, he is likely to be in the top third in the Senate in seniority with a third term.

McConnell filed for re-election Wednesday at the secretary of state's office in the Kentucky Capitol. He apparently would face former Lt. Gov. Steve Beshear of Lexington or former U.S. Rep. Tom Barlow in a general election.

Beshear and Barlow are running for the Democratic nomination. Gov. Paul Patton has endorsed Beshear and pledged his "aggressive help" against McConnell.

McConnell has vowed he will not be outspent, though he said Wednesday any Democratic nominee would be formidable.

On Kentucky issues, McConnell cited his opposition to federal regulation of nicotine in tobacco and votes that put him at odds with many of his fellow Republicans.

He said those included GOP attempts to abolish or cut funding for the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Tennessee Valley Authority, Land Between the Lakes and child nutrition programs.

"I believe I've demonstrated the common sense and the clout — the clout — to take some of the rough edges off of the Republican revolution when Kentucky's vital interests have been at stake," McConnell said.

McConnell also said he was "comfortable" with his decision to oppose a proposed constitutional amendment to forbid desecration of the American flag. Asked if polling indicated he was vulnerable on that issue, McConnell said: "I didn't consult a poll in making that decision, and I haven't taken one lately."