

## Kennedy cites 'personal reasons' for dropping Senate bid

Thursday, 22 January 2009

(CNN) -- Caroline Kennedy has given up her bid for the U.S. Senate seat vacated by Hillary Clinton.

In a one-line statement citing personal reasons, the widely considered front-runner said Thursday she told New York Gov. David Paterson a day earlier that she was no longer interested in the job.

Caroline Kennedy has withdrawn her name from consideration for Hillary Clinton's Senate seat.

"I informed Governor Paterson today that for personal reasons I am withdrawing my name from consideration for the United States Senate."

The statement, provided by Kennedy's press person Stefan Friedman, was issued after hours of divergent reports Wednesday evening.

The 51-year-old daughter of slain President John F. Kennedy has been involved in education reform and women's issues, but she never has held public office and mostly has stayed out of the public spotlight.

"I would be an unconventional choice -- I haven't followed a traditional path, but I think I bring a lifetime of experience to this," she told CNN affiliate NY1 last month.

Clinton was sworn in as secretary of state in the new Obama administration on Wednesday, following her confirmation by the Senate.

Kennedy was widely considered the front-runner to replace the former first lady, who won the New York Senate seat in 2000, and almost all of the buzz about a replacement centered around her.

But as the weeks dragged on, polling showed her popularity among New Yorkers dwindling.

A poll earlier this month suggested that New Yorkers preferred Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, son of former New York Gov. Mario Cuomo, to Kennedy by several percentage points.

New York Reps. Carolyn Maloney, Kirsten Gillibrand and Steve Israel also have been mentioned as possible replacements for Clinton.

All three drew single-digit support in the January poll, which saw 31 percent of respondents favoring Cuomo and 24 percent preferring Kennedy.

Paterson is tasked with appointing a replacement until a new election is held in 2010. He told CNN on Monday that he was still undecided, but hoped to make a decision "in the next few days."

The news of Kennedy's withdrawal comes after her uncle, Massachusetts Sen. Edward Kennedy, suffered a seizure at a luncheon Tuesday after Obama's inauguration. Doctors said the seizure was triggered by fatigue. Sen. Kennedy, 76, was diagnosed with brain cancer last May.