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## Another loss in Northwest clout

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In the U.S. Senate, where seniority is king, the once-sovereign Pacific Northwest continues to abdicate by increments. The region's historic strength will be eroded just a bit more next year when Idaho Republican James A. McClure calls it quits.

McClure, 65, would have been up for re-election this year, but he announced last week that he won't seek a fourth term. That means his status as ranking minority member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will be lost to another state.

Not so many years ago, Idaho, Washington and Oregon were spilling over with high-ranking and influential senators.

From Idaho, McClure served with Democrat Frank Church, who was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. McClure himself was Energy and Natural Resources Committee chairman during the 1981-86 period when Re-

publicans enjoyed a majority in the Senate.

Washington's Warren G. Magnuson was the Senate's senior member, its president pro tem and chairman of the Appropriations Committee. Fellow Washington Democrat Henry M. Jackson was in the top five in seniority and was Energy and Natural Resources Committee chairman when McClure wasn't.

Oregon Republicans Mark Hatfield and Bob Packwood were, and still are, ranking minority members of the Appropriations and Finance committees respectively. Assuming Hatfield is re-elected this fall, he and Packwood will be all that remains of the Northwest's once power-packed contingent in the Senate.

Less-seasoned senators who step into the departed lions' shoes are not necessarily less talented. It's just that the Senate takes its time recognizing talent, and it's doubtful that the region ever again will have the kind of across-the-board influence it enjoyed in the heady 1970s.