

Wisconsin GOP Congressman Backs Drive to Recall Senators

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A move by antiabortion forces to recall Wisconsin's two Democratic U.S. senators got a boost during the weekend when a Republican congressman threw his weight behind it.

Rep. Mark W. Neumann, a likely Senate candidate next year, said at a state Lutherans for Life gathering that he already had signed petitions seeking to recall Sens. Herb Kohl and Russell Feingold. He urged other antiabortion activists to do the same.

Kohl, one of the state's most popular politicians, was reelected to a six-year term in 1994. Feingold, a freshman with a recent public opinion approval rating of 55 percent, is up for reelection next year.

But the recall effort, based on their votes against a ban on a controversial form of late-term abortion, could change that schedule. The well-financed, well-organized effort is led by a group calling itself First Breath Alliance, which has more than 5,000 petition-carriers and a budget approaching \$100,000, according to recent news reports.

A Kohl spokesman said the senator supported restrictions on the late-term abortion procedure but did not back a total ban that would include cases in which the mother's health or life was seriously in danger.

Neumann, who asserts he is not involved in the recall effort, said Saturday that signing the petitions would send a message on the issue. "I would think they would understand a few hundred thousand recall petitions," he said, noting that antiabortion forces still are short of the 67 Senate votes needed to override a presidential veto on the issue if one occurs again.

First Breath Alliance launched its recall effort April 4. It has 60 days from that date to present nearly 391,000 petition signatures each against Feingold and Kohl. If enough valid signatures are submitted, the Wisconsin Elections Board could call special recall elections for later in the year.