

Nevada losing clout in Washington

By Erin Kelly, Gannett

WASHINGTON – The departure of disgraced former Sen. John Ensign has set off a political chain reaction that will weaken the clout of Nevada’s small congressional delegation, analysts say.

“We’re going to have an exciting and competitive election season, but when it’s over, we’ll end up with a lot less clout in Washington, D.C.,” said David Damore, a political scientist at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

For the past several years, the five-member delegation had enjoyed outsized influence as its members gained seniority and stature in their respective parties.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., holds by far the most power as the top Democrat in Congress – a post he has used to funnel billions of federal dollars to Nevada and to stop the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump from being built.

But Reid’s continued clout depends on the outcome of the 2012 election and whether Democrats can maintain their Senate majority. Meanwhile, other members of the delegation have already ceded influence – or will do so soon – as they give up House seats to run for Ensign’s former job.

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