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Rep. Hyde Reflects on 30 Years of Office

By Andy Shaw

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Hyde led impeachment of Pres. Clinton.

As Congressman Henry Hyde prepares to step down due to poor health, he reflects on 30 years of service and answers a poignant question about leading the Clinton impeachment hearings--Would he do it again?

In an ABC7 exclusive, the eloquent 81-year-old conservative from DuPage County said he has second thoughts about leading the impeachment of President Bill Clinton in 1998 on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice in connection to the Monica Lewinsky affair because the process led to the embarrassing disclosure of Hyde's own extramarital affair in the 1960s. Hyde referred to his affair as a "youthful indiscretion."

"Accusations hurled at me to intimidate me were misplaced and I regret having to deal with them, but they didn't intimidate me," said Hyde.

"Would you do it again?" asked ABC7's political reporter Andy Shaw.

"That is a very good question. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I might not," said Hyde.

The veteran republican is also admitting for the first time that the impeachment of Clinton may have been in part political revenge against the democrats for the impeachment proceedings against GOP President Richard Nixon 25 years earlier. *

"Was this pay back?" asked Andy Shaw.

"I can't say it wasn't. But I also thought that the Republican Party should stand for something, and if we walked away from this, no matter how difficult, we could be accused of shirking our duty," said Hyde.

Hyde won the hearts of conservatives years ago by leading a successful fight to ban federal funding of abortion. But he also joined liberals in supporting gun control bills and family leave. Regardless of the issue, he was a consummate wordsmith, even today in discussing his decision to retire.

"My physical strength is ebbing. Father Time and Mother Nature have been pursuing me, and I am 81," said Hyde.

Hyde will retire in January of 2007 after 16 terms in the house.

In July 1974, the U.S. House Judiciary Committee approved three articles of impeachment against President Nixon, charging obstruction of justice, abuse of power and contempt of Congress. The full House did not vote on those articles because Nixon resigned on August 9, 1974.