BENTON ENTERS
'58 SENATE RACE

'Would Welcome Nomination,' He Says After Dodd Announces Bid

Former Senator William Benton of Southport yesterday entered the Democratic race for U. S. Senate in 1958, a few hours after Thomas J. Dodd of West Hartford became an avowed candidate for the nomination.

Mr. Benton, who served in the Senate from 1949 until 1953, said in a statement he "would welcome the opportunity to serve there again."

Phehlan Backs Bid
Nicholas J. Phehlan of Fairfield, veteran member of the Democratic State Central committee from the 25th Senatorial district, said he would support Mr. Benton and do all in his power to line up delegate strength for him in the district.

Mr. Dodd, former congressman who lost to Senator Prescott Bush (R) in the Eisenhower landslide last year, earlier served notice on party leaders throughout the State that he is in the field for the nomination against Senator William A. Purtell (R) next year. His statement indicated that he is prepared to wage a statewide primary battle for the nomination if he fails to win it in the convention.

Mr. Benton, a former assistant Secretary of State under the Truman administration, was appointed to the Senate in 1949 by former Gov. Chester Bowles, his one-time partner in the advertising business, after Raymond E. Baldwin resigned to go on the State Supreme court bench.

Mr. Benton defeated Senator Bush in an election to fill the vacancy in 1950 but lost to Senator Purtell in 1952. Two years ago Mr. Benton entered interest in the senatorial nomination but failed to arouse support and it went to Mr. Dodd.

Lauds Rivals

Senator Benton included some complimentary references to Mr. Dodd, Mayor Richard C. Lee of New Haven, regarded in state party quarters at this time as the likely party choice for the Senate nomination, and for Mr. Bowles and Governor Ribicoff in his statement.

He said: "Tom Dodd's announcement doesn't surprise me. He was an excellent congressman and he made a good candidate for the Senate against heavy odds in 1956. He would make a strong senatorial candidate again."

"Our party in Connecticut is fortunate in having a number of men highly qualified to serve in the U.S. Senate. Reports are widespread that Mayor Richard Lee of New Haven may seek the nomination. He is doing a job in New Haven that is attracting national attention. I foresee his re-election this November by the biggest majority in New Haven history."

"Many people ask me about Chester Bowles. He is a national and, indeed, a world figure respected from coast to coast. As a former governor he knows Connecticut and the nation's needs and would make a great U. S. Senator."

"As to my own intentions, I can only promise you that I will continue in the future as I have in the past 25 years as a Connecticut Democrat in public life who has been honored and privileged to serve his party and his nation in both the administrative and legislative branches of our national government."

Hints At Primary Battle

Mr. Dodd's letter stirred wide speculation in political quarters that he is prepared to wage a statewide primary contest for the nomination if he fails to win it in the Democratic state convention. Although he made no direct mention of a primary, his action in calling for "an open contest before the people of Connecticut," that would be decided "not by the few but by the many," appeared to give clear indication that he is planning to go into a primary, if necessary. This inference was reinforced when Mr. Dodd wrote: "I am prepared ultimately to rest my case with all the Democratic voters of this State," and added in regard to his request for support from town chairmen and State Central committee members "I will make the same request of every Democrat in Connecticut and will rest content with their decision."

Ran Ahead of Stevenson

Mr. Dodd has been regarded as a contender for the Senate nomination since the 1956 election when he lost to Senator Bush by 1,102 votes. In 1952 he lost to Senator Purtell by 88,788 votes while Mr. Bush was defeating Governor Ribicoff, who, if it is assumed, will be our gubernatorial candidate for reelection and, if elected, a successful candidate."