

Democratic leaders assailing Van Drew as 'traitor'

By ERIC AVEDESIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew's decision to switch parties from Democrat to Republican prompted several strong words from his ardent supporters and Republicans skeptical of his future political ambitions.

New Jersey Senate President Steve Sweeney was joined by other top Democrats from southern New Jersey, including every county chair in the 2nd Congressional District, in condemning Van Drew.

"Jeff Van Drew's decision to switch parties is a betrayal to every voter who supported him in 2018 — Democrats, Republicans and unaffiliated," Sweeney said. "But now he is out of the Democratic Party and in November, we are going to take him out of Congress. We flipped the 2nd District from Republican to Demo-

crat last year and we will do it again next year."

Last week, southern New Jersey Democratic leaders refused to sign a document committing their support to Van Drew.

According to a release from Sweeney, the support of these leaders in 2018, including other state leaders such as the New Jersey Education Association, the New Jersey AFL-CIO, SEIU-New Jersey, New Jersey Democratic State Committee Chairman John Currie and Gov. Phil Murphy, was "instrumental" in Van Drew's victory.

U.S. Rep. Donald Norcross, D-1st, released a statement demanding Van Drew apologize to his supporters and backers for changing party affiliation.

"Jeff Van Drew owes an apology to all those who endorsed and supported him, from groups like the AFL-CIO, NJEA, SEIU and End

Citizens United, to Governor Murphy, Chairman Currie and New Jersey's representatives in Congress, to the people of South Jersey who thought he believed in the same things we do," Norcross said. "I was one of the earliest people in Congress to back an impeachment inquiry years ago because we must act to defend our democracy. Whatever party he claims to represent, Van Drew is just plain wrong to support Trump's corrupt actions. I look forward to supporting the Democratic candidate next year who will truly represent South Jersey's values."

Norcross' brother, George Norcross, is a prominent southern New Jersey businessman and New Jersey Democratic leader.

Essex County Democratic Committee Chairman and former state assemblyman LeRoy Jones also condemned Van Drew for leav-

ing the Democratic Party.

"Public service should be about serving the public, not serving self. Unfortunately, Rep. Van Drew has decided that his own political interests outweigh the interests of the people whom he serves and the ideals upon which this nation was founded," Jones said. "Let's be very clear: Donald Trump's vision of the United States leaves behind women, people of color, working families and middle-class families all across New Jersey. The president has committed multiple impeachable offenses, for which he deserves to be removed from office."

Jones said Van Drew is "afraid of losing his seat to a Democratic challenger" and chose to "embrace President Trump and his war on N.J."

"As Democrats, and, most importantly, as New Jerseyans, we will work over-

time to ensure that the 2nd Congressional District is returned to a public servant who will work for the benefit of his constituents and not himself," Jones said.

Longport resident and political science professor Brigid Callahan Harrison announced Monday that she is a Democratic candidate for Van Drew's 2nd Congressional District seat.

Harrison taught political science and law at Montclair State University for the past two decades and is the author of "American Democracy Now," a leading political science textbook in the United States, along with "A More Perfect Union," "Power and Society," and "Women in American Politics."

"It's time to put politics aside and do what's right for South Jersey. We need citizens, not politicians. That's why I'm running for Congress," Harrison said

in a statement. "Those of us across South Jersey deserve a true leader who is not afraid to ask questions, engage the community, demand the truth and who will always put the needs of the district and its people before self-interest. Jeff Van Drew made a choice. He has repeatedly ignored the voices of our community and has instead sold his soul, cutting backroom deals with the White House. Whether you're a Democrat, Republican or independent, the last thing the people of the 2nd Congressional District need or want is to elect a blind pawn for Donald Trump."

Harrison said voters deserve an "independent-minded representative" who will fight for a stronger health care system, infrastructure investment and "getting corporate special-interest money out of our politics."

Simonsen



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Erik Simonsen served his final meeting as mayor of Lower Township. He will join the state Assembly in a couple of weeks.

Continued from Page A1

Simonsen became vice principal of the Richard M. Teitelman School and moved into the position of athletic director at Lower Cape May Regional High School.

"While doing that, though, he became a councilman in Lower Township and after just a few years decided to step it up and became mayor of Lower Township," Ridgway said.

He called Simonsen a "game changer" in Lower Township. Ridgway said the township is in its strongest-ever financial position and has its largest cash surplus in its history.

In the video, Councilman Tom Conrad noted Simonsen was elected as a councilman in wards two and three and to the office of mayor.

"You do have the record, I think, for most positions held in the township," he said.

Conrad advised Simonsen to not forget where he came

from and for what he stands.

"Sometimes Trenton changes a few things and always look out for the people of Lower because we are forgotten down here just like Cape May County is," he said.

Township Clerk Julie Picard said Simonsen is "a rare breed of politician who was able to effectuate change without compromising your integrity."

A number of department heads wished Simonsen well in his newly elected office.

Simonsen said he would continue to keep Lower Township in his focus.

"I think having some extra weight in Trenton will help get things done down here because a lot of times we are forgotten," he said.

He said a slogan he used in his campaign for the Assembly seat was "we love being at the bottom of the state but we're tired of being treated like the bottom of the barrel."

West Cape changes organic waste-pickup day

WEST CAPE MAY — Organic waste such as grass, leaves, plant materials, branches or sticks (½-inch or smaller) will be picked up Monday mornings starting Jan. 6.

Larger branches may be taken to the borough recycling center during

regular business hours.

Waste must be in paper biodegradable bags and be placed curbside by 7 a.m. Sample complimentary bags are available at Borough Hall while supplies last.

Additional bags are available at hardware

stores.

Bags cannot exceed 40 pounds and cannot contain invasive species such as bamboo or phragmites. No soil or concrete is allowed in the bags. Plastic bags are prohibited. No commercial landscaping waste is allowed.

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