

Seventh House impeachment manager ousted from US Congress

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The August 20 Georgia primary had one other notable result, besides the defeat of Cynthia McKinney: the ouster of four-term Republican congressman Bob Barr. A vitriolic right-winger with links to white racist groups such as the Council of Conservative Citizens, Barr was the earliest proponent in Congress of impeaching Clinton, introducing a motion to launch impeachment hearings in 1997, before Monica Lewinsky had come to public notice.

Barr was ousted by another incumbent Republican congressman, John Linder, after the two were put into the same congressional district in a redistricting plan drafted by the Democratic-controlled state legislature. There was little to separate Linder and Barr politically. Both are staunch allies of former House Speaker Newt Gingrich in the takeover of the Republican Party by Christian fundamentalist and other far-right elements.

Linder, a dentist and seven-term state legislator, entered Congress in 1992, while Barr, a former CIA agent and US attorney, was one of those carried into office in the 1994 Republican sweep. Linder is one of the most conservative members of Congress, identified with a plan to abolish the federal income tax and inheritance tax and replace them with a national sales tax that would fall most heavily on working people.

Barr was at a disadvantage in the newly drawn district, which had more of Linder's former constituents than his own, but he had the backing of the most rabid sections of the far-right nationally. Joining him on campaign swings through his district were such figures as Wayne LaPierre of the National Rifle Association, Rev. Lou Sheldon of the Traditional Values Coalition, David Keene of the American Conservative Union, anti-tax campaigner Grover Norquist, and talk show host G. Gordon Liddy. A highlight of his campaign was a \$250-per-person

fundraiser where the principal speaker was Kenneth Starr, the independent counsel who spearheaded the impeachment drive.

While Barr has occasionally come into conflict with the Bush administration's anti-terror policies, criticizing the Justice Department and Attorney General John Ashcroft from a right-wing libertarian standpoint, he did not make this an issue in the primary. Instead, he sought to portray Linder, somewhat ludicrously, as a closet liberal akin to Clinton in his political outlook. After one joint appearance before a Republican audience, Linder mocked Barr's obsession, remarking, "A significant part of this district has discovered that Clinton is no longer president."

The phalanx of prominent right-wing political operatives backing Barr proved to have little impact on the contest. Linder won decisively, by 68 percent to 32 percent, combining a comfortable margin in affluent Republican areas and a heavy crossover vote from Democrats who saw the opportunity to remove Barr from Congress.

Barr's departure will reduce the number of House impeachment managers remaining in Congress from 13 three years ago to only 6 today. Besides Barr, the departed include:

- * James Rogan of California, defeated for reelection in 2000;

- * William McCollum of Florida, defeated for election to the US Senate in 2000;

- * Charles Canady of Florida, did not run for reelection in 2000;

- * Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas, won reelection unopposed in 2000, then gave up his seat to take a position under Bush as head of the Drug Enforcement Administration;

- * Ed Bryant of Tennessee, defeated in the Republican

primary for US Senate last month;

* Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, won reelection in 2000, now running as Republican candidate to succeed Strom Thurmond in the US Senate.

No impeachment manager has won higher office since, and four of the seven who left Congress were defeated in their last election campaign.

The rapid and ignominious demise of Barr, who was propelled to national prominence by the networks and the print media during the impeachment frenzy, is symbolic of the vastly inflated stature of all of the politicians and pundits of the far right. While fascistic elements like Barr have gained the upper hand within the Republican Party, and come to exercise enormous influence within the political establishment as a whole, their actual support in the general population is minimal.



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