

CIA Democrat Max Rose faces off against Trump Republican in Staten Island

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Three weeks ahead of the midterm elections, the Democratic and Republican candidates in New York's 11th congressional district, Max Rose and Dan Donovan, squared off in a debate Tuesday evening. The event underscored the right-wing character of the Democratic Party's "resistance" to the Trump administration.

Rose is one of 30 Democratic Party politicians with ties to the military and intelligence apparatus running in competitive races, identified by the *World Socialist Web Site* as "CIA Democrats." The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee eyed his district early on as part of its "red to blue" initiative, an attempt to regain a Democratic majority in the House of Representatives.

The 11th district encompasses the borough of Staten Island and a portion of southern Brooklyn. It is the only House seat in New York City currently held by a Republican. In 2016 a majority voted for Trump. Four years earlier, Obama carried the district.

The axis of Tuesday's debate revolved around the candidates' attitude towards the policies of the Trump administration. Donovan, who was endorsed by Trump in the Republican primaries, spent much of his time seeking to demonstrate he was a loyal lackey of Trump.

Donovan had opposed the administration's efforts to roll back portions of Obamacare and voted against the tax bill, but upheld Trump's positions in Congressional votes 87 percent of the time, according to FiveThirtyEight.com.

Donovan aligned himself with the president's brutal attack on undocumented immigrants. While nominally opposing the separation of families during the debate—a reversal of his position in the primaries—Donovan maintained that Trump was merely upholding the law.

The Republican congressman hailed Trump's economic policy and the speculative boom that has lifted the stock market. "Look at your 401(k) plan and that will tell you the whole story," he told the audience.

Rose, who has spent the campaign mostly avoiding

mention of Trump, stressed during the debate he was willing to work with the president and opposed his impeachment. He also advocated the continuation of the Mueller probe, giving support to allegations of Russian meddling in the election and allying himself with the anti-Russia hysteria of the Democratic Party leadership in Congress.

On immigration, Rose promoted the fig leaf of "comprehensive immigration reform," while also reiterating his support for militarization of the border. "We should be a nation of security and one that enforces our laws, but also one that affirms our values," he said. This is essentially the position put forward by the Obama administration, which deported more immigrants than any administration in history and provided the legal framework for Trump's fascistic attacks.

Tuesday evening Rose reiterated on Twitter a number of his own comments during the debate that make clear the right-wing standpoint of his criticisms of Donovan and Trump:

"On one side is Max Rose and the NYPD, and on the other side is Dan Donovan. Anyone who has served on the front lines as I have knows that 21st century policing has to be intelligence driven policing."

Rose's promotion of the New York Police Department is particularly noxious given that his district was the site of the murder of Eric Garner by narcotics squad officers in 2014. Garner was accosted by the police after he had broken up a fight. He was accused of selling loose cigarettes and choked to death after refusing to submit quickly enough to police. Donovan was the district attorney in Staten Island at the time and played a key role in ensuring the officers were acquitted.

He also tweeted:

"Because of the GOP tax bill, we won't have the money for the next depression, the next recession, the next war."

As he has throughout the campaign, Rose made repeated reference to his military background as his primary qualification for office. After graduating with a Masters degree from London School of Economics, Rose enlisted in the Army. He was deployed to assist in the US occupation of Afghanistan, where he was wounded when his armored vehicle struck a roadside bomb. Rose remains active in the New York National Guard. He took two weeks off of the campaign in August for training.

Among the frequent invocations of his military experience, not a hint of anti-war sentiment has emerged. On the contrary, Rose has put forward a militaristic platform, demanding recognition of Russia as a hostile foreign power and pledging to “ensure we stay the superpower our parents and grandparents worked so hard to build.” The motto of his campaign is “Duty. Patriotism. Service.” His campaign website is fashioned with an Army-style motif and features photographs of his deployment to Afghanistan.

Rose’s national security credentials are an integral part of the Democratic Party national strategy, what the WSWS has characterized as a “friendly takeover” by the intelligence and military agencies.

Democratic Party fundraisers have flooded Rose’s campaign coffers. Rose outraised Donovan by nearly five-to-one from July through September, taking in nearly \$1.5 million in contrast to the incumbent’s \$342,000. Only a tiny fraction of this has come from residents of Staten Island and southern Brooklyn.

Rose has the full backing of the Democratic Party establishment. Barack Obama and Joe Biden are two of the most prominent figures to issue endorsements. He also has the tacit endorsement of “democratic socialists” such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who repeatedly called for a vote for all Democratic candidates for Congress. When questioned by a WSWS reporter about Rose’s campaign, she refused to criticize it. “I don’t know a ton about his background,” she said. “What I try to do is focus on the issues.”

The real interests of the majority of residents finds no reflection in the Max Rose campaign. While both Republican and Democratic candidates cite supposed differences between Staten Island and the rest of New York City, workers in all boroughs of the city face the same fundamental issues of rising inequality and social austerity in their daily experiences.

While household income is slightly above the city average, poverty and near poverty remain widespread. More than 56 percent of residents are forced to pay more

than 30 percent of their income in rent. Among homeowners, more than 40 percent exceed that “affordability” threshold.

The district is sharply affected by the crumbling transportation infrastructure. Residents already have some of the longest commutes in the city, averaging 46 minutes each way. “Express” buses originating in Staten Island routinely take more than two hours to reach their destination in the central business district in Manhattan.

With 31 percent of the district’s population foreign-born, large numbers of residents live in fear that they or someone they love will be swept up in the attack on immigrants. Staten Island’s North Shore has a diverse population of immigrants from Latin America and Europe, along with a more recent influx from the Caribbean, Africa and South Asia. Southern Brooklyn is a center for immigrants from the Middle East.

The opioid crisis has also reached crisis proportions in the area. Staten Island has the highest rate of opioid deaths of any borough. While Rose has sought to exploit Donovan’s indifference to the crisis, the Democrat has nothing to say about underlying causes of opioid abuse. Rather, Rose criticized Donovan for disbanding the District Attorney’s narcotics unit, effectively relegating the issue to one of law and order.

The Socialist Equality Party and International Youth and Students for Social Equality are holding a public meeting in New York City Saturday, October 20 on the CIA Democrats featuring remarks by WSWS US political writer Patrick Martin.

The CIA Democrats and the 2018 elections: What way forward for the working class?

Saturday October 20, 2:30pm

The Center, room 110

208 W 13th Street, NYC



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