Fascistic candidates gain in Republican Party

Patrick Martin
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Openly fascistic candidates are gaining ground within the Republican Party, which is moving ever further to the right even as the working class and large sections of the middle class move to the left, as expressed in the demonstrations against the police murder of George Floyd.

In Georgia's Republican primary election June 9, a supporter of the QAnon conspiracy campaign was the leading candidate for the party's nomination in the 14th Congressional District, a seat held by Republican Tom Graves, who stepped down after five terms in office. The district, which comprises the northwest corner of Georgia, along the Alabama and Tennessee borders, is considered a safe Republican seat.

Marjorie Taylor Greene, co-owner of a local construction company, won 41 percent of the vote, more than double the vote of her closest competitor, John Cowan, a neurosurgeon and businessman. Greene is heavily favored to win the August 11 runoff election.

Greene's website merely echoes standard Republican rhetoric, with its declaration that she "100 percent stands with President Trump and against the left-wing socialists who want to wreck our country." But both local and national media have reported that Greene has publicly backed the claims of QAnon, an internet-based fascist trend that urges Trump to arrest the leaders of the Democratic Party and impose a dictatorship in America.

According to Media Matters, which monitors ultra-right media and internet outlets, Greene is likely to be the first candidate linked to QAnon to win a seat in Congress, out of 51 such candidates who entered Republican congressional primaries this year. Several other QAnon-linked candidates have won Republican nominations, but all in heavily Democratic districts where there is little official Republican activity.

Greene has posted on Facebook and on Twitter in support of "Q," the purported originator of an internet conspiracy theory that presents Nancy Pelosi and Hillary Clinton as organizers of a global child sex abuse ring and Trump as a Christ-like figure who will unleash "The Storm," the mass round-up and likely execution of leading Democrats.

According to a report in the *Daily Beast*, "QAnon believers have been charged with two murders, a terrorist incident, and two child abduction plots related to their beliefs, among other crimes. The FBI considers QAnon a potential source of domestic terrorism."

Without going any further into this demented realm, one can be certain that its adherents were enthusiastic supporters of Trump's demand for military intervention against the mass protests against police violence, and that they would respond as loyal foot soldiers to any summons by Trump to dispute or overturn the outcome of the November election. Trump himself regularly retweets material derived from QAnon and has invited one of its advocates to a White House meeting.

Greene's campaign produced an ad last week in which she brandished an assault rifle and warned "antifa" demonstrators to "stay the hell out of northwest Georgia." She added, "You won't burn our churches, loot our businesses, or destroy our homes." Facebook pulled the ad as a violation of its rules against promoting the use of firearms against people.

Greene has been endorsed by Representative Jim Jordan of Ohio, former leader of the ultra-right House Freedom Caucus, and received $122,000 in campaign funding support from the House Freedom Fund, the PAC linked to the caucus.

Four days after Greene emerged as the frontrunner for the Republican nomination for the safe Georgia seat, another ultra-rightist won the Republican nomination in the Fifth Congressional District of Virginia, defeating the Republican incumbent, who was denied renomination at the district's convention.

Bob Good, a former fundraiser for the athletics

department of Liberty University, the largest fundamentalist Christian college, took 58 percent of the vote against Representative Denver Riggleman, who won his first term two years ago.

The convention was held as a drive-through with ballots dropped off at a church in rural Campbell County, near Lynchburg, where Liberty University is located. The 2,300 who voted had to apply for ballots and be approved by Republican Party officials. The votes were counted behind closed doors, with the results not announced until after midnight, leading to complaints from Riggleman and threats of a lawsuit.

Good launched his challenge in response to Riggleman's presiding last year at the gay marriage between two people who had volunteered for his 2018 congressional campaign. Riggleman's current occupation—the former Air Force intelligence officer now owns a whiskey distillery—also did not sit well with Christian fundamentalists.

Good claimed he was running to uphold "the country's founding Judeo-Christian values," while complaining that Riggleman offered only "tepid support" to President Trump, citing in particular his vote to support a Democratic resolution opposing the withdrawal of American troops from Syria.

National Republican leaders, including President Trump, had backed Riggleman for renomination, as did Liberty University President Jerry Falwell Jr. Riggleman was hardly a "moderate" by Republican Party standards. He was a member of the House Freedom Caucus, the most right-wing faction in the party, and had the endorsement of the current caucus chairman, Andy Biggs of Arizona, and the former chairman and chief Trump defender in impeachment, Jim Jordan of Ohio.

Good himself may not even qualify for the general election ballot since he failed to file the necessary paperwork in time to meet a June 9 deadline. The state election board is scheduled to meet on July 7 to consider whether to grant him a waiver.

The largely rural district stretches 250 miles from the Washington, DC suburbs down to the Virginia-North Carolina border, with only a handful of small cities, including Lynchburg, Charlottesville and Danville. Riggleman won the seat in November 2018, defeating Democrat Leslie Cockburn. Incumbent Republican Tom Garrett had retired to be treated for alcoholism after he came under scrutiny for close ties to the white supremacists who organized a neo-Nazi march in Charlottesville in September 2017.

Riggleman won the Republican nomination in 2018 by a single vote of the Republican state committee over Christian fundamentalist Cynthia Dunbar. Now Dunbar's supporters have backed the challenge by Good.

Four candidates are seeking the Democratic nomination in the Fifth Congressional District, which will be decided in a primary election June 23. Three of the four are Marine veterans: millionaire businessman Roger Huffstetler; John Lesinski, a career officer with 26 years in the Marines; and Claire Russo, a Marine intelligence officer in Iraq who later worked as a civilian counterinsurgency adviser in Afghanistan and is married to an Army Special Forces officer. With Riggleman's defeat by Good, the seat is now likely to be targeted by the Democratic Party nationally, which will pour in resources for whichever Democrat emerges with the nomination.

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