

Republican who voted for Trump impeachment defeated in South Carolina primary

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Primary elections for the Republican and Democratic parties were held Tuesday in four states, Maine, South Carolina, North Dakota and Nevada, with the most notable result being the defeat of incumbent Congressman Tom Rice in the South Carolina Republican primary.

Rice was the first of the 10 House Republicans who voted for the impeachment of Donald Trump after the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol to lose his party's nomination outright. He was heavily defeated, taking only 24.8 percent of the vote compared to 51.8 percent for Russell Fry, a state representative who had Trump's endorsement and fervent support.

The Seventh Congressional District runs from the wealthy Myrtle Beach area on the coast up along the border with North Carolina and is predominately rural and small town. Rice is a conservative who held the seat for 10 years and consistently voted with the Republican congressional leadership and the Trump administration, making his vote for impeachment a surprise.

While Rice's defeat was by a huge margin, in a neighboring South Carolina district, first-term Representative Nancy Mace survived a Trump-backed challenge by a more right-wing opponent, Katie Arrington, by a 52-43 percent margin. Mace did not vote for impeachment but publicly criticized Trump's role in the coup and voted to certify the victory of Joe Biden in the Electoral College.

Unlike Rice, however, Mace soft-peddled her criticism of Trump in the primary, presenting herself as a loyal supporter of his ultra-right political agenda who would be more effective than Arrington, who had been defeated in 2018 by Democrat Joe Cunningham. Mace

ousted Cunningham in 2020. Both former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley and former White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney had endorsed Mace.

Five of the 10 Republican House members to vote for impeachment are leaving Congress, although Rice is the first to be defeated in a primary election. Four others decided not to run again, facing the combined effect of pro-Trump opposition and redistricting.

Three—Adam Kinzinger of Illinois, Fred Upton of Michigan and Anthony Gonzalez of Ohio—were redistricted into primary contests with another Republican incumbent, while the fourth, John Katko of New York, was redistricted into a much more Democratic-leaning electorate. All were in states that lost seats as a result of the 2020 census.

One pro-impeachment voter, David Valadao of California, is in second place in an all-party primary, narrowly ahead of a pro-Trump challenger. But Trump did not intervene in this race, and the Republican Party officially supported Valadao.

Four others face primaries in August: Liz Cheney in Wyoming, Dan Newhouse and Jaime Herrera Beutler in Washington state, and Peter Meijer in Michigan. Three of the four, all but Cheney, are expected to win renomination easily. Polls show Cheney far behind opponent Harriett Hageman, who has the backing not only of Trump but the entire House Republican leadership. Cheney has raised 10 times the money and has the backing of the corporate media and the tacit support of the Biden administration and the House Democratic leadership.

In Nevada, backers of Trump's "stolen election" lies won the Republican nominations for three top offices:

former state attorney general Adam Laxalt for US Senate; Joe Lombardo, sheriff of Clark County (Las Vegas) for governor; and Jim Marchant, an advocate of QAnon conspiracy theories, for secretary of state, Nevada's chief election officer.

Marchant was actually one of the "fake electors" who claimed he had been elected despite Biden carrying the state by 13,000 votes. He has called for an end to all forms of electronic voting and exclusive use of paper ballots counted by hand. Marchant launched the America First SOS Coalition that raises money for electing pro-Trump "stolen election" advocates as secretary of state in states across the US.

In the most significant Democratic primary contest Tuesday, Representative Dina Titus won renomination for her Las Vegas seat, with a landslide defeat for Amy Vilela, the former chair of Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign in Nevada. Vilela won only 16 percent of the vote, and Sanders' endorsement was entirely perfunctory, coming only four days before the primary. (Sanders said this week that he would support Biden if he decided to run for reelection, rather than support a primary challenger.)

In an indication of the increasingly likely outcome of the November congressional elections, the Republican Party gained a House seat in south Texas that was for all intents and purposes surrendered voluntarily by the Democrats.

Democratic Representative Filemon Vela quit Congress in March to become a Washington lobbyist, a far more lucrative position. This made necessary a special election to fill the vacancy for the remaining six months of his term, in which Republican Mayra Flores defeated a token Democrat, Dan Sanchez. Flores outspent the Democrat by 10 to one but carried the vote on a low turnout, by a much narrower margin of 51 to 43 percent.

The majority Hispanic 34th District is being reconfigured by redistricting, and in the November election the Democratic candidate will be Representative Vicente Gonzalez, who currently holds the adjacent 15th District seat. Gonzalez is heavily favored to take back the seat, but the net gain for the Republicans is likely to remain since his former seat has been redistricted to make a Republican victory there far more likely.

Flores had considerable funding from national

Republican groups, as well as the backing of billionaire Elon Musk, whose SpaceX has a launch site in the district. While an immigrant from Mexico, Flores is married to a Border Patrol agent and embraced Trump's fascistic policies on militarizing the US-Mexico border, as well as denouncing what she called the "radical socialist communist agenda" of the Democratic Party.

According to a *Washington Post* report published June 14, based on an analysis of all Republican primary results through the end of May, the Republican Party has already chosen 108 candidates for statewide or federal offices who support Trump's lies about a "stolen election," out of 170 races surveyed. Another 41 winning candidates, while not publicly on record declaring that the 2020 election was "rigged," have made "election security" a central part of their campaigns.

Republican primary voters "have chosen eight candidates for the U.S. Senate, 86 candidates for the House, five for governor, four for state attorney general and one for secretary of state who embrace Trump's election denialism," the newspaper reported.

The *Post* did not, of course, draw the obvious political conclusion from these figures: The Republican Party is rapidly being transformed into a fascistic political organization, in which fealty to the would-be Fuhrer Trump and hostility to democracy are its political axes.



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