

Memo: Republicans Uphill Battle In NJ-02

Christine Bennett <Bennett@dccc.org>

Thu 12/19/2019 1:42 PM

To: Christine Bennett <Bennett@dccc.org>

DCCC MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties

From: Lucinda Guinn, DCCC Executive Director

Date: Monday, December 19, 2019

Subject: Republicans Uphill Battle In NJ-02

Republicans face a significant challenge holding onto New Jersey's Second Congressional District and Congressman Jefferson Van Drew's party switch does not improve their chances in November. Beyond the vulnerabilities on display in his own internal polling, Van Drew's party switch has further weakened him as a candidate: he enters 2020 despised by Democrats, distrusted by Republicans, and likely viewed poorly by independents who watched him swap identities for political gain. His reputation as an independent voice for South Jersey was prefaced on the mirage he held any core beliefs, but he has undermined that image by earning [coverage](#) of his [politically motivated](#) party switch.

Southern New Jersey Democrats were already motivated to challenge Van Drew because of his very public attacks on other Democrats. His decision to join the Republican Party only increases Democratic voter motivation in the district.

[The Primary Will Weaken The Eventual Republican Nominee](#)

President Trump's support of Van Drew is far from assured. After making his initial announcement, Van Drew loses most of his political value to the White House. And most Trump White House political endorsements [only consist of a boiler-plate](#) tweet.

But even with President Trump's support, Van Drew is far from certain to prevail in the Republican primary.

- His Republican primary opponents have [indicated](#) that they all intend to stay in the race despite Van Drew's party switch.
 - David Richter, a wealthy candidate with the ability to [self-fund](#) and pose a serious challenge to Van Drew even without establishment support, has stated he is staying in the race. Richter has already made the NRCC's "On

The Radar” list, so House Republicans’ campaign arm will have to choose whom they support.

- Since Van Drew’s party switch, Richter [affirmed](#) his willingness to spend \$1 million of his own money on the race, which is more funding than Van Drew currently has on hand.
- Richter has already begun [attacking](#) Van Drew. Richter went on local talk radio Wednesday morning and argued that the Republican establishment was “trying to clear the field for [Van Drew] now to get the Republican nomination because he can’t win a primary, he can’t defend his own record.”
- Van Drew’s Democratic voting record provides an outsized target for Republican candidates to attack
 - Van Drew has voted [against](#) President Trump 93 percent of the time; including votes [against](#) border wall funding, a vote [condemning](#) Trump’s remarks about four congresswomen as racist, and a vote [limiting](#) federal spending at properties owned by President Trump.
 - He’s also voted against some of Trump’s signature policies, including [against](#) the Administration’s ban on transgender members of the military, [against](#) the Administration’s rule to block abortion providers from Title X funding, and [against](#) the Administration’s withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change.
 - Van Drew has a [100% rating](#) with Planned Parenthood. A liability in a Republican primary defined by a president who selected a vice president who attempted to [shut down](#) the government over Planned Parenthood funding.
 - Van Drew spoke at a [protest against](#) the Trump Administration’s pursuit of seismic testing, expressing his disappointment that Trump would support the testing.
 - Van Drew’s decades as a Democrat also provide plenty of damaging soundbites and quotations about the Democratic party for opponents to weaponize. We’re happy to [share](#) some [here](#).
- Van Drew’s position on impeachment doesn’t mean he is an ally of President Trump
 - The Daily Beast [reports](#) that prior to Van Drew’s party switch he was “obsessively Anti-Trump” and even called Trump “crazy.”
 - Van Drew [endorsed](#) Cory Booker for President in the 2020 election (something David Richter has already noted in his attacks as well).

General Election Issues

If Van Drew is able to win the Republican nomination, he enters the general election with serious vulnerabilities. His own internal general election polling from December 7-10 includes several data points that demonstrate the difficulty he will face competing in a general election:

- In a general election sample, only 31 percent of voters believe he should be re-elected. 48 percent want someone new.

Q.14 Overall, do you think Jeff Van Drew deserves to be re-elected to Congress or do you think that someone new should be given a chance?

	Total
Deserves to be re-elected	31
Someone new	48
(Don't know/refused)	20
Deserves Re-election - Someone new	-17

- President Trump has lost ground since winning NJ-02 by 4.6 points in 2016. In a general election sample his favorability is even and voters are split on whether he deserves to be re-elected.

Q.13 Overall, do you think Donald Trump deserves to be re-elected as president or do you think that someone new should be given a chance?

	Total
Deserves to be re-elected	47
Someone new	50
(Don't know/refused)	3
Deserves re-election - Someone new	-3

In Summary

Congressman Van Drew tried to change his values because his own polling showed he completely alienated the Democratic base and was on track to lose his primary. Now, by switching parties, he has further motivated that base, tied himself entirely to President Trump, and will have to explain a voting record that is out of step with Republican primary voters in NJ-02. We wish him the best of luck and are confident that Democrats are in a strong position to win this seat in 2020.

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For Immediate Release: December 19, 2019
CONTACT: Christine Bennett | 202.297.4102

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