

## Democrat Van Drew Wins, Flips South Jersey GOP Seat

Democrat Jeff Van Drew won a closer-than-expected race against Republican Seth Grossman in pursuit of Frank LoBiondo's Congressional seat.

By [Anthony Bellano](#) | Nov 6, 2018 9:00 am ET | Updated Nov 7, 2018 7:33 am ET



In a race that was closer than many projected, Democrat Jeff Van Drew is projected to win the Congressional seat soon to be vacated by Frank LoBiondo. Van Drew is projected to win New Jersey's Second Congressional seat by both [Politico](#) and [NBC](#).

Van Drew finished with 52 percent of the vote, while Grossman collected 46.2 percent of the vote, according to unofficial results posted by Politico. Libertarian John Ordille and independent candidates Steven Fenichel, Anthony Parisi Sanchez and William Benfer also ran for the seat, with each capturing less than one percent of the vote.

For much of the night, the result was in doubt, but for the first time in more than two decades, a Democrat will represent the district – a win that helped tip the balance of power in Congress.

Although he had not yet won, Van Drew posted a ["Thank You South Jersey"](#) message on Twitter at about 10 p.m., and delivered a victory speech at about 10:30 p.m. **(See embed below).**

But it was Grossman who grabbed an early lead by as much as four percentage points. As the results continued to come in, Van Drew pulled ahead and eventually captured the seat.

According to Politico, Van Drew won Cumberland County by 18 percentage points. He also won Cape May and Gloucester counties, but it wasn't until the results came in from Atlantic County at nearly midnight that Van Drew was named the projected victor. He won Atlantic County by 12 points.

Grossman captured traditionally Republican Ocean County by 22 percentage points, Burlington County by 24, Salem County by five points and Camden County by 13 points. Waterford Township is the only Camden County town in the district.

#### **[RELATED: 2018 Election Results: Vote A Referendum On 'Trump's GOP'](#)**

“Congratulations to state Senator Van Drew and his supporters on a great victory,” Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chairman Ben Ray Luján said. “Senator Van Drew’s focus on reaching across the aisle to find common ground will make him an excellent representative for this community. I look forward to welcoming him to Congress and getting to work on solving our nation’s most critical issues.”

It was a seat national Democrats were looking to flip early on, after LoBiondo announced last year he wouldn't seek re-election. In his announcement, LoBiondo said “there is no longer middle ground to honestly debate issues and put forward solutions,” due to increasing political polarization. [Read more here: Frank LoBiondo To Retire From Congress](#)

Earlier this year, national Republicans called the district a "recruiting hole," and the national party eventually withdrew its support for Grossman following a series of controversial comments.

Grossman took a strict conservative approach to the election, saying he would always support President Donald Trump’s agenda. During the debate, he said climate change has always existed, “just ask Noah.”

The former Atlantic City Councilman and Atlantic County Freeholder captured the party’s nomination despite not receiving support from the party’s leadership in any of the counties in the district during the primary. After controversial comments he made in which he called diversity “a bunch of crap,” the national GOP decided not to endorse him. [Read more here: National GOP Pulls Endorsement For NJ Congressional Candidate](#)

[See related: Diversity 'A Bunch Of Crap': NJ Congressional Candidate](#)

Grossman's comments centered on what he called the Democrats efforts to divide everyone into groups. He said things such as affirmative action prevent the best candidates from being accepted to the best schools. He said Republicans make big mistakes when they nominate lesser candidates just because they fit into a box, citing the nomination of then Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno over Jack Ciattarelli in last year's gubernatorial election.

During the debate, he also claimed that The Washington Post sent a reporter to follow him around for a day, but failed to write a story depicting his involvement in numerous activities involving minorities.

It was a stark contrast to LoBiondo, the 12-term incumbent Congressman who was seen as a moderate. Van Drew can be seen much the same way as LoBiondo. Van Drew supports the Second Amendment, and even came under fire earlier this year for his approval ratings from the National Rifle Association (NRA). Read more here: [Parkland Shooting Survivor Targets Politician In Ocean City Area](#)

He also supports investment in renewable energy to combat climate change. During last month's debate at Stockton University, he said scientists and fishermen alike agree that climate change is very real.

And for most of the campaign, it appeared as though Van Drew would win easily. In two polls conducted by Stockton Polling Institute of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University, Van Drew held double-digit leads over Grossman.

Van Drew is the first Democrat to represent the district since William J. Hughes was in office from 1975-1994. LoBiondo has held the seat since 1995.

Some thought maybe the rain would keep voters away, but the non-stop pouring rain did not keep voters home in what could be a record turnout midterm election across the state. Even with the various issues facing local communities, President Trump was on their minds.

In one polling location, some shouted out, "Dump Trump!" while others walked in right beside them and excitedly said they think Trump is doing an excellent job.

"We are total Republicans and Trump has done everything right. We're voting for Hugin," said New Jersey resident Lorraine Luzzo, 82, with her husband, Louis.

"The economy is doing well, there are jobs, patriotism is back in our country," she said.

Others had clearly different views

"President Dump, as I call him, is hands-down the worst president we've had in a long time," said New Jersey resident Steve Laspina, 64. "He is ... an embarrassment to our country. I'm embarrassed by his racist policies and what he says."

"I agree!," said a woman walking by. "He is immoral, he's terrible."

Others said they weren't bothered by issues facing the man at the top of the Democratic ticket – Sen. Robert Menendez – who has been dogged by corruption charges for years

"That did bother me, but not as much as I hate Trump," chimed in another Democratic voter, who only wanted to be identified as Nick, 72. "And that doesn't bother me as much as Hugin being a big pharmaceutical executive and making millions off sick cancer patients. And Hugin raised thousands of dollars for Trump in New Jersey. He's a big Trump supporter."

"The corruption charges bother me, but Menendez is the lesser of two evils," said Dominick Rose, 36 who said he's begrudgingly voting for Menendez today. "I didn't like either Hugin or Menendez but you have to pick one."

Michael Alarcon, 42, is a Republican who voted for Trump. He said he will be voting for Hugin today because he thinks Trump has done a good job.

"Liberal Democrats screamed and yelled over the past two years and that's not how you govern. Instead, all that screaming and yelling is what has driven a lot of Republicans out to vote today," he predicted. "I think Trump has done an excellent job on the economy and on immigration."

Alarcon, who is Latino, was educated at Harvard University, works in finance, but declined to give details beyond that, saying readers would just stereotype him as a wealthy Republican.

"I have gotten some pushback from fellow Latinos for supporting Trump. But I think there is a separation in the Latino community between people who just believe what they read on the news and people who fact check it, and find the truth is quite different," he said. "And the media definitely has a purposefully negative attitude towards Trump."

Alarcon said he doesn't think Trump's immigration policies or rhetoric have been racist at all.

"He wants to make sure there is order in our immigration system. He respects people who follow the laws and due process to get into our country," he said. "And he's very correct in acknowledging that people do do things to take advantage, such as child trafficking and smuggling in drugs and guns and criminals. This is not about race at all."

Rose manages a car dealership and voted for Republican George W. Bush ("He was actually my favorite president"), Barack Obama, Trump and Gov. Phil Murphy. He said he would have voted for Bernie Sanders if he had been the candidate against Trump.

"I just try to look at the issues. This is actually the first time I've ever voted in a midterm. But to me, the issues are too important today: Healthcare, legalizing marijuana, which I strongly support, and tax reform," he said. "I think Trump has done a good job so far. But Hugin is not for legalizing marijuana, which I support."