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## Battle brews among Democrats over primary in South Jersey's 2nd District

By [Joe Hernandez](#) · May 31, 2018

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 Congresswoman Tenzie Youngblood holds up Time magazine with her photo on the cover as Will Brant uses his phone to record Snatch story. Youngblood was campaigning at the department complex in Bridgeton, New Jersey, on May 26, 2018. (Britten Sillers for WHYY)

Tanzie Youngblood wanted to run against a Republican.

The retired school teacher, a Democrat, entered the race for South Jersey's 2nd Congressional District last year, setting her sights on incumbent Rep. Frank LoBiondo.

The Republican has held the seat since 1994, the same year the "Contract with America" catapulted dozens of conservatives into Congress and Newt Gingrich into the House Speakership.

To Youngblood's surprise, LoBiondo announced in November that he was retiring after more than 10 years in the House.

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Van Drew, a dentist by trade, would bring with him a long de



Instead, Van Drew secured all eight county party endorsements right away, leaving Youngblood and the

Van Drew also has the backing of the nationally-focused Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which included Van Drew in its “Red to Blue” program, an effort to flip the House to Democratic control during the 2018 midterm elections.

Although he has the support of party leaders, Van Drew has drawn the ire of many Democrats who see themselves as more progressive. Some voters say Van Drew’s conservative leanings should disqualify him from getting party endorsements.

And his critics say the race comes down to one question: Why would leaders in the Democratic Party support someone like Van Drew over more progressive candidates like Youngblood, who supports gun control and same-sex marriage?

His campaign was unable to fulfill our requests for an interview, but Van Drew has addressed this criticism before.

“It is important to work for your country and not your political party,” he said in a 2017 appearance on NJTV. “I’m a Democrat, but if I really, truly believe there’s a good Republican idea, I would vote for it and support it.”

What many progressives say they find most objectionable about Van Drew is his position on guns.

The Democrat supports the Second Amendment, and reportedly has a few guns of his own. He also has a 100 percent rating from the National Rifle Association, according to VoteSmart, and has received at least \$1,000 in contributions from the group. In the Legislature, Van Drew has voted against gun-control bills.

Parkland, Florida school shooting survivor and activist David Hogg called out Van Drew in an April tweet. “Republicans both Democrats and Republicans take #NRABloodMoney,” Hogg wrote. “Just look up New Jersey state senator @JeVanDrew, he’s a Democrat with An A rating from the NRA.”

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