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TOP STORY

ELECTION 2020

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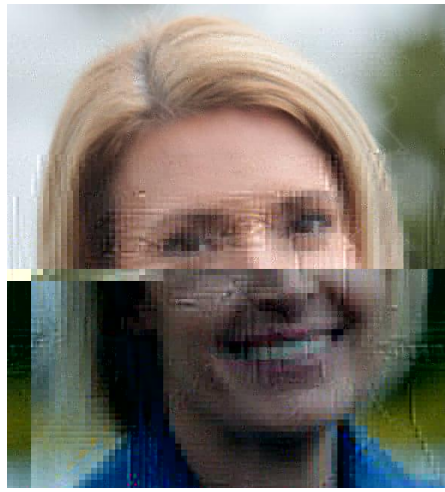
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MICHELLE BRUNETTI POST Staff Writer
Feb 2, 2020



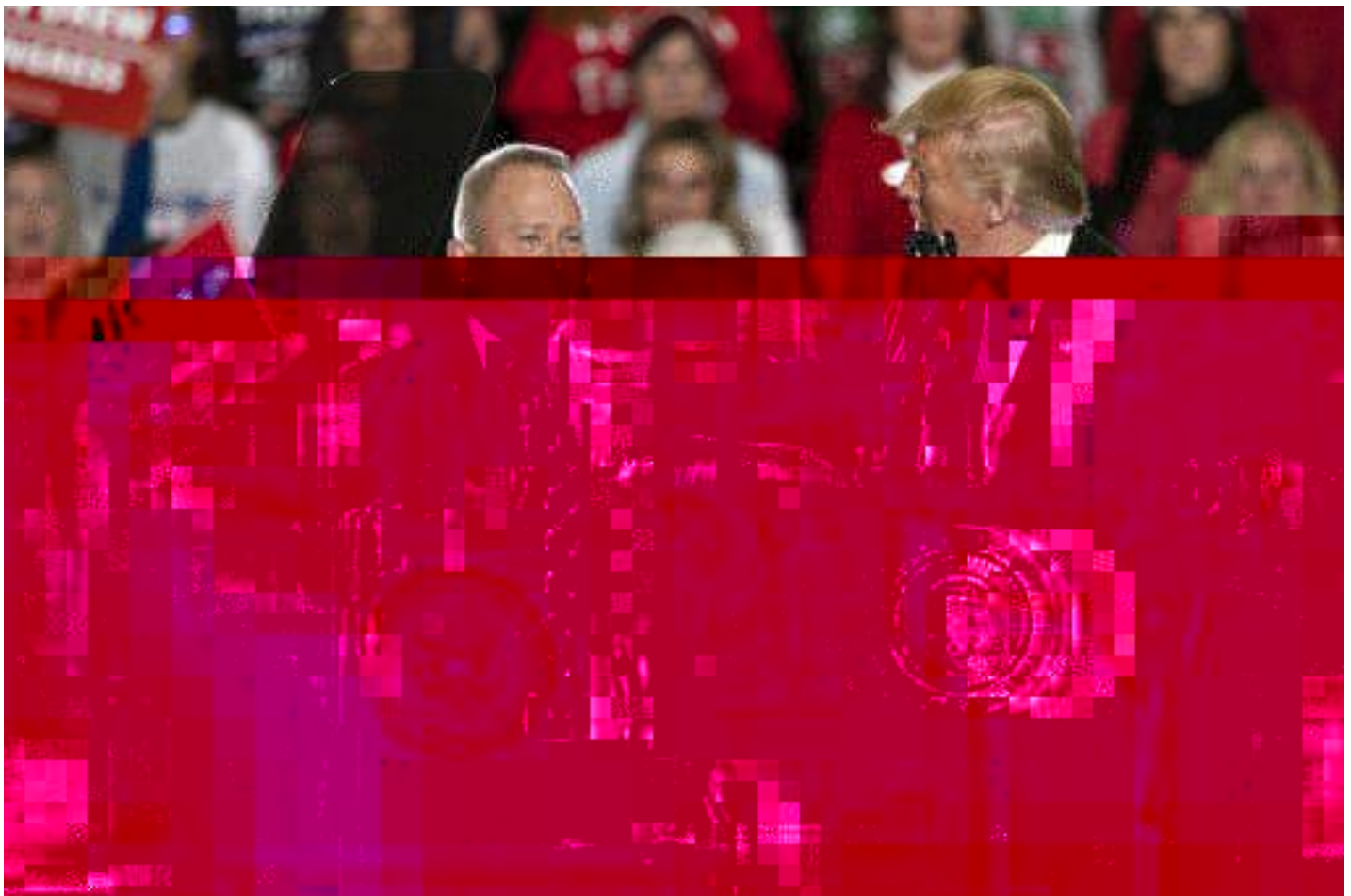
Callahan Harrison

Craig Matthews / Staff Photographer /



KENNEDY

Amy Kennedy /provided



Rep. Jeff Van Drew stands next to President Donald Trump at a Keep America Great campaign rally in Wildwood, NJ on Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2020. Van Drew switched over to the Republican Party. (Heather Khalifa /The Philadelphia Inquirer via AP)

Heather Khalifa/

Tuesday's rally by President Donald Trump in Wildwood cleared the GOP field in this year's 2nd Congressional District race for U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-2nd, and drove home for Democrats "what they are up against in the election," according to one political analyst.

Seeing the president of the United States "come to your district to embrace (Van Drew) — such a major media event ... you're realizing you are going up against quite a bit of firepower," said John Froomjian, executive director of Stockton University's William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy.

About 160,000 tickets were requested for the event, according to the Trump campaign, more than for any other rally Trump has held. Seven thousand were admitted, and thousands more stood in the cold to watch the rally on large screens just outside the Wildwoods Convention Center.

"On the Republican side, it essentially cleared the field. While Bob Patterson is still in the mix, Van Drew's best-funded challenger has left for another district, and everyone else left the race," Froomjian said.

From here, the Democrats go into a primary race, working to differentiate themselves from the pack while shoring up money and organizational power.

Van Drew and the Republicans, on the other hand, can start focusing on the general election and the 40% of voters in the district not affiliated with either party.

Two Democrats have recently established themselves as the strongest, said Carl Golden, a former political consultant to moderate Republican candidates Tom Kean and Christie Todd Whitman who is now a senior contributing analyst with the Hughes Center.

They are Long#n oM d C

Other Democrats, like Atlantic County Freeholder Ashley Bennett, West Cape May Commissioner John Francis, and House Oversight Committee staffer and Vineland resident Will Cunningham, will find it difficult to raise the kind of money needed and to gather and build the organization and professional staff to win a primary, Golden predicted.

And for Brigantine's Robert Turkavage, a retired FBI agent who just changed parties from Republican to Democrat, the hopes of getting organizational support are slim.

Early on, Harrison got the endorsement of six of the eight county party chairs in the district, as well as from state Senate President Steve Sweeney and Atlantic County Democratic Assemblymen Vince Mazzeo and John Armato, and from unions like Unite Here Local 54.

"She started earlier (than anyone) and locked up a lot of organizational support, including the support of the Senate president, which signals the support of the Camden County political organization and George Norcross," Froomjian said.

Kennedy countered with the endorsement of the Atlantic City Democratic Committee, controlled by the Callaway political organization. She also underscored her family's connections to famous national leaders by bringing Martin Luther King III with her to the Trump rally protest.

"I have to say, Harrison seems to be in a stronger position in terms of organizational support. That's really important in a primary," Froomjian said.

Now, Kennedy has to spend money in the primary to counteract that, he said.

We won't know how much she has raised until the Federal Election Commission releases financial reports April 15, Froomjian said.

"Right now, Kennedy has her name associated with American political icons. How strong that is in 2020 remains to be seen," Froomjian said.

Much will depend on whether Kennedy can swing Atlantic County Democratic Chairman Mike Suleiman to her side, both Golden and Froomjian said.

“If Atlantic County were to swing to her, it would be a major development,” Golden said.

Suleiman said Friday he has no intention of endorsing anyone until after the Atlantic County Democratic Convention on March 8, when municipal chairs, elected officials and members of the county committee will vote on who gets the group’s backing and the best spot on the primary ballot.

Vote margins will be narrow, Golden predicted.

“No one is going to run away with this. Obviously that raises a question about being able to put (the party) together again in time for November,” Golden said.

While it’s typical to have a “unity breakfast and hug over bacon and eggs” after a primary fight, Golden said, it’s also typical to “then leave and do what you feel like anyway.”

“If they start attacking each other, the eventual leader may come out damaged,” Froonjian said. “You can be sure the Van Drew campaign will be watching every name-calling and nasty broadside. ... It just makes it harder for the eventual nominee to get going and to unite the party.”

But right from the start, Van Drew set himself apart by voting "no" for Nancy Pelosi for Speaker -- fulfilling a campaign promise but confusing those on the House floor. He was supposed to call out a name of someone for speaker, so his "no" vote was recorded as "present."

Then he was one of the few Democrats calling for bipartisan compromise on a budget to end what became the longest federal government shutdown in history.

Later, he visited the southern border and came back saying there was, indeed, a crisis there. He supported both some funding for a border wall, and increased funding for housing and services to undocumented migrants. Van Drew was also one of just two Democrats to first vote against proceeding with an impeachment inquiry, and to vote against both articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump.

And on Dec. 19, 2019, he announced his party change to Republican while sitting next to Trump in the Oval Office.

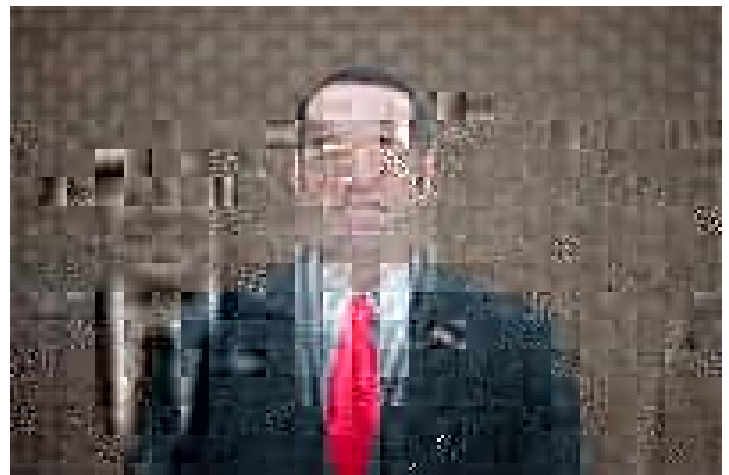


Van Drew

Craig Matthews / Staff Photographer///

Dropped out: Brian Fitzherbert

Brian T. Fitzherbert (dropped out of race Jan. 24, 2020), 30, of Egg Harbor Township, founded the Atlantic County Young Republicans and ran in 2018 in the Republican primary, but withdrew before the primary that was won by Seth Grossman.



Fitzherbert stresses his knowledge of technology and aviation as an advantage for him to help develop those industries in South Jersey. He is a Program Manager for defense contractor L3Harris, working on multimillion dollar programs for military vehicles. Previously, he developed drones, ground control stations, electronic warfare testers, simulators, and area attack weapons supporting the Warfighter at Textron Systems.

Fitzherbert
Provided

He graduated from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and completed his graduate studies at the Whiting School of Engineering at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, studying systems engineering and project management.

He has racked up endorsements from a wide variety of local officials, including former Assemblyman and Cumberland County Freeholder Sam Fiocchi and Northfield Mayor Erland Chau.

Switched districts: David Richter

David Richter, 53, the former CEO of Hill International in Philadelphia, is an engineer, lawyer and businessman. He recently moved to Avalon from Princeton, but summered much of his life in the Cape May County town.

He switched races to the 3rd Congressional District, which covers Ocean and Burlington counties, on Jan. 27.

“I understand what it takes to get things built,” said Richter. “In Congress, I plan to work hard to ensure the federal



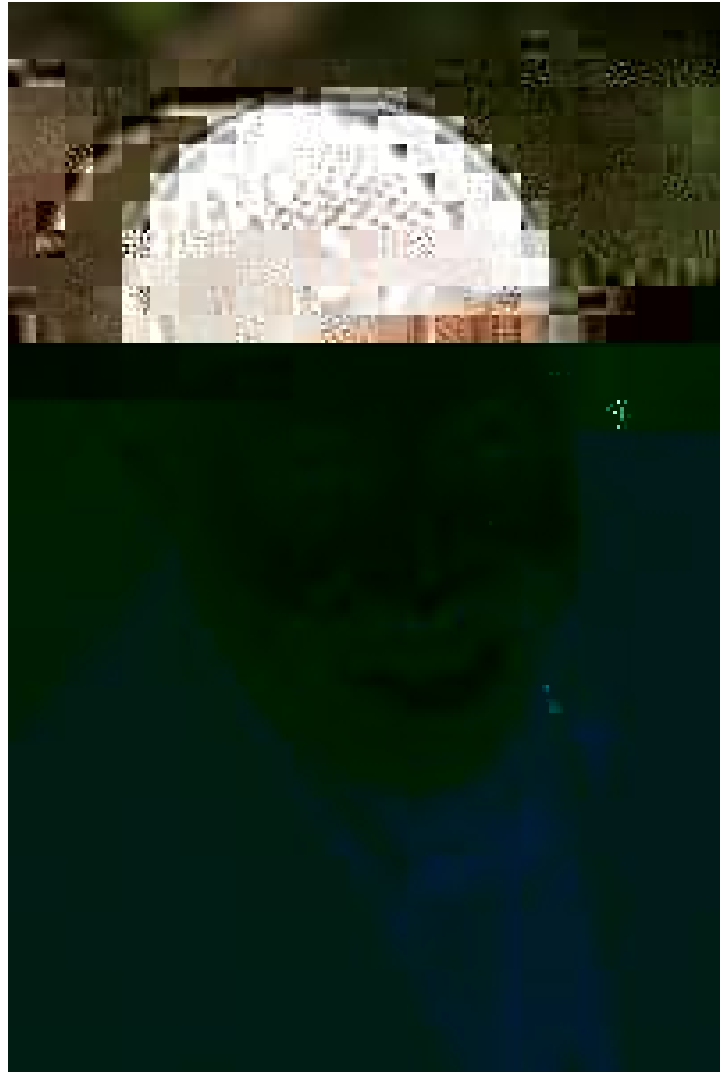
government is investing in South Jersey's infrastructure — expanding our transportation network, keeping our environment clean and maintaining our coastline.”

Richter earned two bachelor'

John Francis

West Wildwood Commissioner John Francis, 73, has a colorful and unusual biography, and he wrote about it in a book published by National Geographic called, "Planet Walker: 22 years of walking, 17 years of silence." Francis spent many of his younger adult years refusing to ride in cars or other vehicles that use fossil fuels, after seeing the results of an oil spill on the Pacific coast. He also stopped speaking for 17 years, in order to learn to listen, he said. During that time, however, he earned a bachelor's, master's and doctorate, became an expert in oil spill cleanup, and worked for the Coast Guard. Now he travels the world as a motivational speaker, he said.

He learned in his silent travels about the interconnectedness of all issues, Francis said. "Really it's all about people and how we treat each other. It's going to manifest in the physical environment." So he said his focus in Congress would not just be on environmentalism, but on human and civil rights, gender equality and economic equity and human relationships "as the foundation for what happens in the environment. You have to be really interested in everything."



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Brigid Callahan Harrison

Longport's Brigid Callahan Harrison is a professor of politics and law at Montclair State University in Essex County. She has been endorsed for by State Senate President Steve Sweeney, by six of the eight county Democratic chairs in the Second Congressional District, and by others.

Long a commenter in the media about New Jersey politics, this is Harrison's first run for office.

Amy Kennedy

Amy Kennedy, of Brigantine, is a former teacher and the wife of former Rhode Island Congressman Patrick Kennedy, with whom she has five children. She announced Jan. 6 she will run in the 2020th who

unaddressed needs in our schools and in our mental health and addiction system. Our economy, though strong, is not meeting the needs of the underserved and middle class.”

Jack Surrency

Jack Surrency, of Bridgeton, is a Democratic freeholder in Cumberland County.

He was first elected to the Bridgeton City Council in 2010 as part of a slate headed by Mayor Albert Kelly, and served on the Bridgeton Board of Education from 2002-2010, according to his resume.

He attended the Tuskegee Institute from 1976-1978, majoring in chemistry with a business minor. He also holds a master's degree in Community and Economic Development from New Hampshire College in Manchester.



Freeholder candidate Jack Surrency at the Ramada Inn during Election Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2016 (Craig Matthews / Staff Photographer)

Craig Matthews / Staff Photographer

Robert Turkavage

Robert Turkavage, 64, is a former FBI agent and manager out of New York. He has recently switched parties to become a Democrat, after a lifetime in the GOP.

Turkavage last ran in the 2018 Republican primary for the 2nd District race, losing to Seth Grossman, and this time is running as a Democrat.

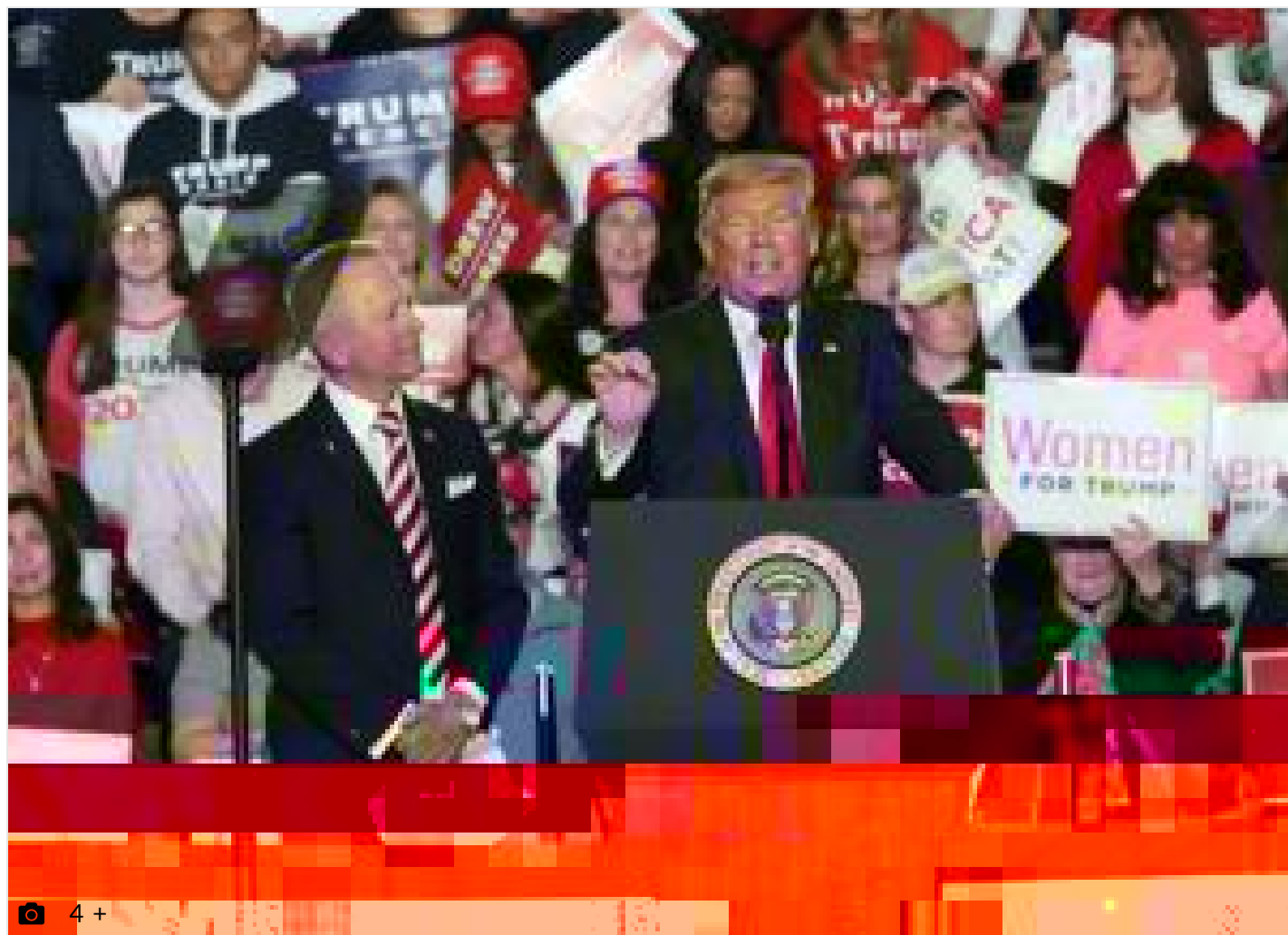
Cunningham said he was homeless for a time as a teen when his mom lost her job. He said his mom is still an hourly worker in Cumberland County, making \$11.50 an hour. Yet with hard work and the help of government programs, he was able to get an Ivy League college education at Brown University. He also has a law degree from the University of Texas at Austin.

"Despite my accomplishments, I have not lost touch with how folks struggle to make ends meet," Cunningham said. "I don't have to look far."

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Democrats call on Trump, Van Drew to reimburse Wildwood for rally



Trump praises Van Drew in Wildwood campaign rally



Kennedy releases new TV ad; Harrison endorsed by AFT NJ arm



Last GOP challenger to Van Drew hits back on rally day



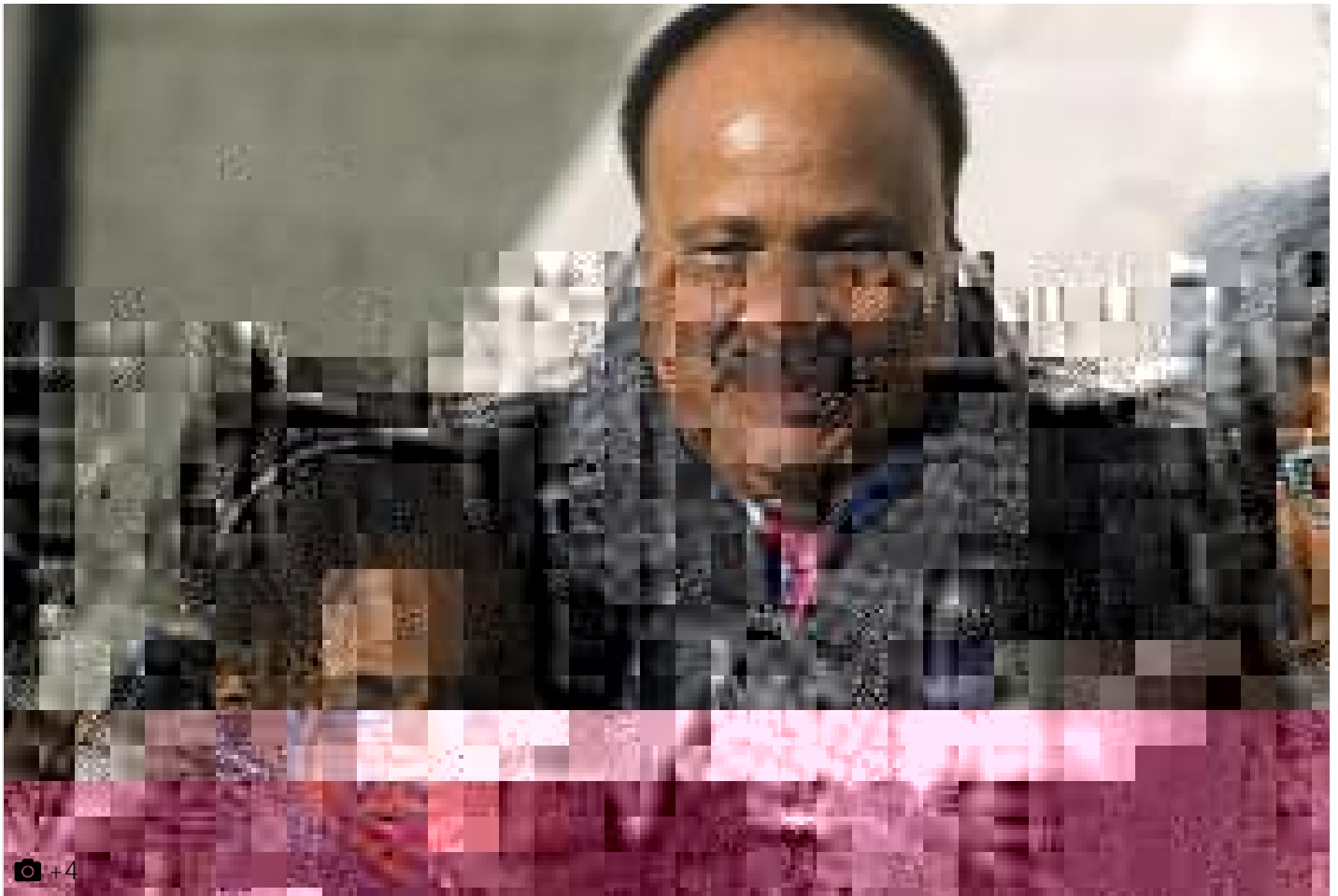
Richter exits 2nd District race, will run for Congress in 3rd



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The latest on the 2nd District Congressional race

More than a rally: Wildwood Trump event cements Van Dream



Martin Luther King III to visit Atlantic City school, Wildwood protest



Local 54 endorses Democrat Bridget Harrison for Congress

Michelle Brunet