



REPUBLICAN GROUP TAKES RARE STEP OF TARGETING GOP INCUMBENT WHO VOTED TO OUST MCCARTHY - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Photo: Rep. Bob Good, R-Va., chairman of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, leaves the Capitol

A political action committee that helps Republicans get elected to Congress is doing the unusual — spending more than \$450,000 to defeat a GOP incumbent. That incumbent, conservative two-term Rep. Bob Good, R-Va., voted to remove former Rep. Kevin McCarthy as House speaker last fall.

It's just the latest example of how money is flowing into races involving some of the eight Republican lawmakers who voted along with Democrats to oust McCarthy. About \$3.3 million has been spent on ads in the Virginia race going into Friday, according to the media tracking firm AdImpact.

The ad buy underscores the internal divisions that have cracked open in the Republican Party since McCarthy's ouster. The rancor has split the party on important House votes and spilled over into some of this year's primary elections, too.

The latest round of ad buys was unveiled on Monday and comes from Defending Main Street, a super PAC affiliated with nearly 90 Republican lawmakers in the Republican Main Street Partnership. The group describes its members as "conservative, governing Republicans." It's just the second time the group has worked to unseat a Republican incumbent.

The first incumbent the group sought to unseat was then-Rep. Steve King of Iowa in 2020. King was removed from his committee assignments after lamenting that white supremacy and white nationalism had become offensive terms. He ended up losing in the GOP primary. Now the group is focused on Good.

"We spend 99% of our money protecting incumbents and adding more mainstream conservatives to the House, but this was a unique situation," said Sarah Chamberlain, the group's president and CEO.

Good has pushed Republicans to seek deeper federal spending cuts, even if that means risking a government shutdown. He leads the most conservative members of the Republican conference as chairman of the House Freedom Caucus, and has opposed the spending

agreement McCarthy worked out with President Joe Biden so the government could continue paying its bills. When Speaker Mike Johnson split up a \$95 billion aid package for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan into three separate votes, he voted no on each piece.

Chamberlain said her group would have worked to defeat Good even if he had not voted to oust McCarthy because of his voting record. The ad purchased by the group doesn't mention Good, but features an endorsement from a former local sheriff for Good's opponent, state Sen. John McGuire, a former Navy SEAL.

"Defending Kevin is not what Main Street does, though we 100% supported Kevin and are sorry that everything happened," Chamberlain said of McCarthy.

Groups coming in to support McGuire don't make it a race about McCarthy, who recently himself called on his followers on X to contribute to the challenger's campaign, saying McGuire "is ready to answer the call to serve our country again. Chip in \$5 today."

But Good's supporters clearly do want to make McCarthy an issue. In a fundraising pitch, an election group that works to expand the House Freedom Caucus said that McCarthy "and his establishment allies" were dumping millions of dollars into the race to defeat Good.

And Diana Shores, Good's campaign manager, said McCarthy is "on his revenge tour and he's targeting conservative leaders like Congressman Bob Good who worked to oust him as speaker for his poor leadership."

Shores said in an email she expects voters in the district to "see through the Swamp Tactics of groups like Defending Main Street."

A group called the American Patriots PAC, backed mostly through donations from Kenneth Griffin, the CEO of the investment firm Citadel, has also begun pouring money into the race, spending more than \$916,000 so far, according to FEC filings.

In a statement, Griffin doesn't reference McCarthy, but instead focuses on McGuire's 10 years as a Navy SEAL and says the PAC's focus is on bringing exemplary leaders to Washington.

"The American Patriots PAC steadfastly supports veteran candidates who have dedicated themselves to our nation, and John McGuire exemplifies this commitment," Griffin said.

Meanwhile, a PAC called Virginians for Freedom has spent more than \$760,000 to oppose Good, FEC reports show.

A vendor used by both groups is Brian O. Walsh, a longtime adviser, ally and friend of McCarthy who is coordinating efforts to unseat some of the eight Republicans who voted to oust McCarthy last fall. Walsh declined a request for comment. He also serves as a senior adviser to the American Prosperity Alliance, which has spent nearly \$300,000 on ads so far in the Virginia race, according to the tracking firm AdImpact.

Good is getting some outside help, with the Sen. Rand Paul-affiliated Protect Freedom PAC spending nearly \$675,000 supporting his reelection.

The political dynamics playing out in the Virginia race featuring Good and McGuire can be seen in another race featuring a GOP lawmaker who voted to oust McCarthy.

In South Carolina, Rep. Nancy Mace is being challenged by Catherine Templeton, a former state agency director. A group called South Carolina Patriots PAC has spent more than \$1 million opposing Mace.

American Prosperity Alliance, the group where McCarthy ally Walsh is a senior adviser, provided the South Carolina Patriots PAC with \$15,000, according to the latest FEC quarterly report. That report doesn't capture contributions after March 31, so it's unclear for now where the political action committee is getting all of its money.

Meanwhile, Club for Growth Action, a group that describes itself as seeking to defeat big-government politicians, has weighed in with more than \$475,000 in independent expenditures supporting Mace



Two other Republicans who voted to oust McCarthy, Rep. El Crane in Arizona and Matt Gaetz in Florida, have picked up GOP challengers in recent weeks.

Of the other four Republicans who voted to oust McCarthy, Rep. Matt Rosendale is not seeking reelection to a Montana district and Rep. Ken Buck has already retired from his Colorado-based seat. Rep. Tim Burchett, R-Tenn., has no primary opponent and Rep. Andy Biggs of Arizona appears safe in his reelection bid.

Associated Press staff writer Chad Day contributed to this report.