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Atlantic GOP chairman criticizes Singh, credits Grossman

JOHN DeROSIER Staff Writer Jun 6, 2018



Hirsh Singh greets supporters Tuesday night at McCullough's Pub & Restaurant after losing the South Jersey Republican congressional primary Tuesday night.

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Matthew Strabuk / For The Press

Linwood businessman Hirsh Singh started his concession speech in the South Jersey Republican congressional primary by apologizing to his supporters for "letting them down."

Singh, 33, had won the endorsement of four of the eight county committees in the 2nd Congressional District and out-fundraised the winner, Seth Grossman, by nearly \$100,000, a significant margin for a primary race in South Jersey.

But in the end, it came down to campaigning on a grassroots level and conveying a conservative message to the voters, which Singh did not do, Atlantic County Republican Chairman Keith Davis said.



Get to know Seth Grossman, the South Jersey GOP nominee for Congress

“Seth showed up at every possible event he could in the area to talk about (his message) and put signs out,” Davis said. “There wasn’t one lawn sign in the district for Hirsh Singh. Signs don’t vote, but they show support, get attention and show that you are running a grassroots campaign.”

Mike Byrne, campaign manager for Singh, did not address the specific claims Davis made but said the Atlantic County Republicans need new leadership.

“It’s no secret there have been concerns about Keith’s leadership over the years,” Byrne said. “Seth is going to need an engaged county chairman elected next week at the reorganization meeting to strengthen his geographical base against Sen. Jeff Van Drew.”

Davis said Singh angered local Republicans and misled county parties about how much personal wealth he had. After pledging to self-fund his campaign and raise as much as \$2 million, Singh filed financial papers indicating he only has \$50,000 to \$100,000 in personal wealth.

To make matters worse, Singh filed the papers a day late and wrote on them that some of his wealth came from winning \$1,000 to \$15,000 at an Atlantic City casino. He then ended the form with a little smiley face.

“To file that form late and then trivialize it with casino winnings and a smiley face ... It was indicative of a campaign that wasn’t very mature,” Davis said.



Van Drew, Grossman claim victory in Congress races

The reasons Grossman defeated Singh go beyond any one campaign issue, said Michael Klein, executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.

For starters, Grossman had name recognition in Atlantic County, which is one of the more densely populated areas in the 2nd District.

“When you look at the numbers, the turnout in Atlantic County is really what made the difference,” Klein said. “Name recognition isn’t a strategy, but it definitely means a lot in an election like this.”

Both Davis and Atlantic County Executive Dennis Levinson, a Republican, said Grossman knows the pulse of Atlantic County, which helped lead to his victory.

He also relied on the popularity of President Donald Trump among Republicans, doubling down on the “Make America Great Again” slogan on campaign signs and in speeches. On Wednesday, Grossman said his conservative message will not change.

As for Singh, Levinson said the businessman shouldn’t give up on his political aspirations.

“Hirsh is young and had to introduce himself a lot this time around,” Levinson said. “Experience matters in these things, and you have to drill your message home. He will get there if he sticks with it.”

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