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# Remember when N.J.'s Van Drew promised 'undying support' to Trump? He wasn't kidding.

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Rep. Jeff Van Drew acknowledges President Donald Trump during a January 2020 rally at the Wildwoods Convention Center. Aristide Economopoulos | NJ Advance Media

By [Jonathan D. Salant | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

How far would Rep. Jeff Van Drew go to show his “[undying support](#)” to President Donald Trump? Now we know.

Van Drew, R-2nd Dist., joined a majority of his House Republican colleagues in trying to overturn the 2020 presidential election that Joe Biden won, [asking the U.S. Supreme Court](#) to throw out millions of votes cast for the Democratic nominee. He gave interviews on Fox News and other media outlets echoing Trump’s false drumbeat that the president was the victim of voter fraud.

Then just hours after the president’s supporters violently stormed the Capitol after Trump told them to “fight much harder,” Van Drew twice voted to [reject the certified electoral votes](#) in two battleground states, even as New Jersey’s other Republican representative, Chris Smith, refused to join the effort.

And he [spoke on the House floor](#) Wednesday opposing impeaching Trump a second time for inciting the rioters.

It all came just about one year after Van Drew, who had won his seat as a Democrat, gained national attention — and Trump’s affection — for opposing the president’s first impeachment and then switching to the Republican Party.

“He said ‘undying loyalty’ to Trump and I guess he meant it,” Republican political consultant Mike DuHaime said. “It’s head-scratching to me. I think he knows better.”

Van Drew did not respond to more than a week’s worth of phone calls and emails seeking comment. He told the Associated Press after the vote that he objected to the count because “some really, really — if everybody would clear their head and look at this — that some really wrong things did happen.”

Trump’s allegations of voter fraud, though, were rejected by dozens of judges, then-Attorney General William Barr, and election officials in all 50 states who certified their election results.

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More than 50 House Democrats, including Reps. Albio Sires, D-8th Dist., Bill Pascrell Jr., D-9th Dist., and Donald Payne Jr., D-10th Dist., co-sponsored a resolution calling on the House Ethics Committee to investigate Van Drew and the other Republicans who opposed certifying the results and determine whether they should be expelled or face other sanctions.

“Any House members who tried to overturn the election and install a dictator violated the Constitution and should not sit in Congress,” Pascrell tweeted.

In his speech opposing Trump’s impeachment, Van Drew said: “Nearly half the country supports our current president. This takes their voice away. We must be bigger and better than the most instincts that have been driving our political discourse. It is destroying us.”

After being one of only two House Democrats to vote against Trump’s first impeachment, Van Drew met with the president in the Oval Office in December 2019 and announced he was switching parties. As photographers snapped away and the national media looked on, Van Drew told Trump that “you have my undying support.”

The following month, Trump held a massive rally in Wildwood where he brought Van Drew out on stage and called him “courageous leader.”

Van Drew was re-elected in November despite being outspent by his unsuccessful Democratic challenger, Amy Kennedy, a member of the iconic political family.

“He really sold himself as someone who would work across party lines,” Kennedy said.

On Election Day, Van Drew received a greater percentage of the vote than Trump in every county in the district except Ocean.

“Congressman Van Drew is a strong representative for the people of the 2nd Congressional District,” state Republican Chairman Michael Lavery said. “South Jersey knows it can always count on Congressman Van Drew to stand up for what he believes in and fight for his constituents.”

Van Drew wasn’t exactly in the minority among Republicans who stayed loyal to the president. While 10 House GOP lawmakers voted for impeachment, 187 opposed it. However, an NPR/PBS NewsHour/ Marist Poll released Friday found 58% of Americans blamed the Capitol riot on Trump.

“He swore his dying support to a demagogue rather the Constitution,” said Montclair State University political science professor Brigid Callahan Harrison, who unsuccessfully sought the Democratic nomination to take on Van Drew. “He’s doubling

down. That to me indicates a really baffling level of devotion to this individual. It's a kind of blind allegiance."

Van Drew's actions went "a little bit off-brand," according to John Froomjian, executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.

"How do you feel if you're a voter who always considered Jeff Van Drew as common sense, down to earth, reflecting basic values, and now he is voting on the premise that the election is stolen and there is massive fraud that overturned the real result?"

Froomjian said.

"He immediately put out a statement during the siege decrying the violence and he still voted on the falsehoods that sparked it in the first place. Certain facts are now immutable. Certain votes can't be taken back."

Van Drew already is paying a price for his fealty to the president. Several corporations, including AT&T and Comcast, have announced that they are ending political action committee donations to the Republicans who voted to overturn the election results or pausing all contributions. They contributed \$46,000 to Van Drew's 2020 re-election.

And that doesn't include two Atlantic City casino owners, MGM Resorts and Caesars Entertainment, whose PACs gave \$8,500 to Van Drew and are now under pressure from the casino employees' union, Unite Here, to stop funding the GOP lawmakers who voted to overturn the election.

Still, South Jersey is one of the most Trump-friendly areas of the state, said Ben Dworkin, director of Rowan University's Institute for Public Policy and Citizenship.

"He's overreached if he was running statewide but he's not," Dworkin said. "He's running in the 2nd Congressional District, which may be the hospitable place to take that stance."

But Micah Rasmussen, director of Rider University's Rebovich Institute for New Jersey Politics, pointed out that the last South Jersey representative to be so identified with an unpopular president was Republican Rep. Charles Sandman, a fierce defender of Richard Nixon's during Watergate.

Sandman lost re-election in 1974, the year Nixon resigned in disgrace, to Democrat William Hughes, who held the seat until he retired in 1995. A Republican, Frank LoBiondo, then represented the district until he retired and Van Drew was elected in 2018.

This time around, Rasmussen asked: “Has anyone more publicly hitched his wagon to Trump?”

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