

Nassau GOP leaders target Scaturro petition signatures

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By Paul LaRocco

Backers of congressional candidate Bruce Blakeman are trying to make it very difficult for his potential primary opponent to get a coveted minor party line.

Executive leaders of Nassau's GOP Committee – which endorsed the Republican Blakeman to succeed Carolyn McCarthy in the 4th District – recently received a memo asking them to seek the same ballot petitioning signatures that Republican Frank Scaturro got two years ago on his way to winning the Conservative Party primary.

Scaturro in 2012 was bypassed by Conservative leaders in favor of Republican County Legis. Francis X. Becker Jr. In attempting to primary Becker for the Conservative line, Scaturro did not get the required signatures from Conservative members to be listed on the party's primary ballot, but won anyway with a write-in campaign.

Though he finished third in the general election behind McCarthy and Becker, Scaturro received 15,603 votes on the Conservative line.

This year, Blakeman received Conservative backing, and as the party's preferred candidate, he has a three-week window to begin getting Conservative signatures to appear on their primary ballot before Scaturro can try.

Therefore, in a memo sent out late last week, a Nassau GOP official, Jerry Marino, told fellow executive leaders to "concentrate immediately" on Conservative Party "opportunity to ballot" petitions supporting Blakeman. He attached a file listing the names and addresses of the roughly 300 people who signed the same petitions for Scaturro in 2012.

"Since we have an exclusive window to obtain these signatures (Frank CANNOT until March 25th), it is our opinion that we can take his signatures. This will make it extremely difficult for him to obtain the necessary amount," Marino wrote in the memo, which was obtained by Newsday.

Tony Santino, a spokesman for the Nassau GOP, declined to comment on the memo.

Scaturro, who has often clashed with county party leaders -- including in trying to get into a local committee meeting this week -- said that those leaders "will apparently do anything and everything to shut voters out of the political process."

"I intend to build on past success, win the Conservative vote, and provide 4th District residents principled representation in Washington," Scaturro said. "We will show in the process that democracy is the best disinfectant."

Blakeman, a former presiding officer of the Nassau County Legislature, is being endorsed by local Republican, Conservative and Independence Party leaders in the 4th district race.

The retiring McCarthy (D-Mineola) has endorsed Democratic candidate Kathleen Rice, the Nassau district attorney, but County Legislative Minority Leader Kevan Abrahams (D-Freeport) is also seeking the Democratic line this fall.