



## GOP Congressman Seeks 10th Term in District Where Democrats Outnumber Republicans

Frustrated and underfunded challengers call popular Rep. Frank LoBiondo out-of-touch and afraid to debate

By **Tara Nurin**, October 18, 2012 in **More Issues**

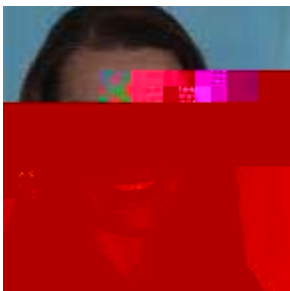


Rep. Frank LoBiondo

U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-2nd) has held his seat in Congress for nine terms despite one counter-intuitive fact: The district counts more registered Democrats than Republicans.

While registration data show the gap between the parties has narrowed since last year's redrawing of district lines, there are still 9,000 more Democrats than Republicans.

And with a late-September Richard Stockton College of New Jersey poll showing **LoBiondo** has a 62 percent favorability rating and beats his closest opponent, **Democrat Cassandra Shober**, by a 20-point margin, political observers expect no deviation from the past.



Cassandra Shober

"He's got the seat as long as he wants," predicted The Cook Report House Editor David Wasserman.

"That's the one district that would be most likely to change parties if the incumbent decided not to run," added John Weingart, associate director of the Eagleton Institute for Politics at Rutgers University. "But LoBiondo is a legislator who's pretty well regarded. The general perception is that he's doing a good job."

### Related Links

- [Rep. Frank LoBiondo Campaign Website](#)
- [Cassandra Shober Campaign Website](#)
- [John Ordille Campaign Website](#)
- [David Bowen Campaign Website](#)
- [Charles Lukens Campaign Website](#)
- [More stories from the 2012 Voter Guide](#)

In addition to Shober, LoBiondo faces four other opponents in the general election Nov. 6, John Ordille, a Libertarian, and independents David Bowen, Frank Faralli Jr., and Charles Lukens.

Some of these challengers are trying to gain an advantage by painting LoBiondo as too conservative for the district's relatively moderate population.

"My opponent has voted to protect companies that ship jobs overseas. My opponent voted against the

women's organization tracked by Project Vote Smart since 1998, the first year listed in its public database, was 70 percent. But the National Journal's scores on his social, economic and foreign policies split almost evenly between conservative and liberal.

His moderate stance is perhaps the only way he's been able to hold on to his seat for so long. The South Jersey district, which is the largest and poorest in the state, spans a diverse range of farming communities, Shore towns, rapidly growing suburbs, the Pine Barrens and Atlantic City. Covering all of Salem, Cumberland, Cape May and Atlantic counties, half of Gloucester and parts of Ocean and Burlington counties, it contains "pockets of Democrats and a very strong Republican presence," said Ingrid Reed, former New Jersey Project Director of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University.

The incumbent may also gain an advantage from the district's sprawling size, said Daniel Douglas, director of Stockton's William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy. He said it's more difficult to meet voters in such a large district and that LoBiondo benefits from 18 years of traveling through the region while in office.

"The congressman enjoys superior name recognition," Douglas said. "He's had opportunity to visit his constituents across his district and, by contrast, Shober is introducing herself."

More than half of voters in the 2nd District were unfamiliar with Shober as of the late September polling, which can be partially attributed to her financial disadvantage against a well-funded incumbent.

According to Federal Elections Commission (FEC) filings, Shober had raised \$51,600 by Sept. 30, while LoBiondo had raised almost \$1.5 million. Lukens, a socially conservative prayer-in-schools advocate from Ventnor who worked as a nurse and an Army intelligence officer before retiring, had raised less than \$1,400.

Douglas, however, said that although it's unusual for an incumbent to refuse to debate a challenger when the invitation is made by a respected and neutral third party, it isn't likely to cost LoBiondo many votes, especially given that it's more typical for incumbents to avoid debates and for challengers to seek them.

"For challengers, if you stand on the same stage with the candidate, you are elevated in prestige. So incumbents want fewer debates," he said.

Without a debate forum and without much money, the remaining candidates are struggling to spread the word about their candidacies. **Bowen, Lukens** and **John Ordille**, a UPS truck driver from Northfield who's running primarily to inform people about the Libertarian platform, all boast robust websites. Faralli maintains no web presence and has not responded to inquiries from any news media.

Faralli, Lukens and Ordille did not return requests for comment.

