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USA

# A Socialist Congressman Fights for His Political Life in New York

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**Jamal Bowman, one of a handful of socialists in the U.S. Congress, is fighting for his political life under attack from the Zionist lobby because of his criticism of Israel's genocidal war on Gaza. His challenger in the Democratic Party primary election that will take place on June 25 is George Latimer who supports Israel and has the backing of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee or AIPAC, a powerful Zionist organization.**

While attention in the coming November 5 election is naturally focused on the U.S. presidency, the nation's most powerful office, contested by incumbent Democratic president Joe Biden and former president Donald J. Trump, in addition all 435 Representatives in the House and 34 senators are also up for election. At present the Senate is divided. Democrats have a 51-49 majority in the Senate (including independents Bernie Sanders, Kyrsten Sinedma, Angus King, and Joe Manchin). But a lot of attention is being given to Bowman's race in the Democratic Party primary election in the 16th Democratic Congressional District, partly in the north Bronx, a borough of New York City, and partly in the wealthier suburb of Westchester because of its importance for the left.

Bowman, a black educator, first won election as an advocate of the Blacks and Latinos in his district in 2020 and was reelected in 2022, but today he faces fierce opposition because of his support for a ceasefire. He claims that 69% of the people in his district support a ceasefire, and he holds a demonstration for a ceasefire every Tuesday.

The district has a population of 756,711 that is 39% white, 29% Latino, 19% Black, and 3.2% Asian, and 11% of the district is Jewish. Historically most New York Jews were liberals. When Barack Obama ran for president in 2008, he received 90% of votes cast in the 16th district, more than in any other in the country. Many Jews voted for Bowman in his previous elections, but since the Gaza War broke out last Oct. 7, a majority of Jews appear to have abandoned him.

Bowman's opponent Latimer, who is of Irish and Italian descent, has spent 35 years in local government and is the chief executive of Westchester County. He is center-left Democrat, though he calls himself a progressive, who has won the support of dozens of local mayors and other local elected officials. The progressive group Indivisible split over the Bowman-Latimer contest. AIPAC has given \$600,000 to the Latimer campaign and has spent \$12 million on attack ads targeting Bowman. At one point, Latimer claimed that Bowman's campaign funds came "from Hamas." Latimer also has suggested that Bowman has ignored the Latino, Asian, and white members of his district.

While AIPAC, many of whose donors are wealthy Republicans, supports Latimer, Bowman has the backing of Democrats like Senator Bernie Sanders and fellow representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Bowman, who was initially put forward by the Justice Democrats, later joined DSA, but has had a rocky relationship with the group. In 2021, Bowman voted for funds for Israel's "iron dome" anti-missile system and then joined a trip to visit Israel organized by J Street, the liberal Jewish lobbying group that supports U.S. military aid to Israel and opposes the Palestinian right of return. DSA debated then whether or not to expel Bowman and Bowman said he would not pay dues to the group, but he was not expelled and did not quit, and today DSA is supporting him again because of his advocacy of a ceasefire.

If Latimer wins the June 25 primary he will win the election, and he could be relied upon to vote with the Democrats, but Bowman's defeat would weaken the nine-member Squad of progressive Democrats in the House, and it will be a defeat for DSA which has just five members there. Recent polls show Latimer in the lead—but the election isn't over yet.

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