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3 Takeaways From 2nd Congressional District Debate

Democratic challenger Tim Alexander faced off against incumbent Rep. Jeff Van Drew on issues facing South Jersey.



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Reply



From left, John Froomjian, executive director of the Hughes Center, moderated the Oct. 19 debate between 2nd Congressional District candidates, Democratic challenger Tim Alexander and Rep. Jeff Van Drew, the Republican

incumbent. (Courtesy of Stockton University)

GALLOWAY, NJ — Ahead of the Nov. 8 election, incumbent Republican Rep. Jeff Van Drew and Democratic challenger Tim Alexander faced off in a public debate.

Hosted by the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University and The Press of Atlantic City, the major party candidates shared their opinions on issues facing South Jersey and the country as a whole.

Van Drew, a former Democrat, switched to the Republican party in 2019 to support former President Donald Trump.

He has been a consistent supporter of the former president, backing Trump on a number of issues. For example, Van Drew objected to Joe Biden's [Electoral College win](#) and was the only Democrat to [oppose Trump's impeachment](#).

Alexander, a Galloway resident, is a retired law enforcement officer and current civil rights attorney.

He has received a number of endorsements from high-ranking Democrat officials, including Rep. Bonnie Watson-Coleman, Sen. Cory Booker, and Gov. Phil Murphy. Alexander's key issues include social justice and civil rights, economic growth and protecting democracy.

Van Drew criticized President Joe Biden and his policies, calling him the "worst president since the Civil War." Alexander said problems lie with "MAGA Republicans," who pose a threat to the democracy.

You can watch the entire one-hour debate through [Stockton's Hughes Center online](#), here are three key takeaways from Alexander and Van Drew's views on South Jersey.

Climate Change and Renewable Energy

The first question answered by Alexander and Van Drew was about renewable energy; specifically, wind turbines at the Jersey Shore. The proposed Ocean Wind 1 project has long drawn controversy in Ocean City, with numerous residents blasting the wind farm. **Read More:** [Impact Needs Study For Offshore Wind Project, Ocean City Says](#)

Alexander said he was in favor of renewable energy, but emphasized the importance of speaking with the communities.

"We have to invest in wind energy, alternative energy from fossil fuels," Alexander said.

"I'm a hundred percent in favor, but we have to, have to talk to our communities to make it work," he said.

Van Drew also agreed that the communities were important, with the opposite view.

"Renewable energies are important, but it's also important that we don't hurt the people that live here and work here," he said, citing the damage turbines could do to the fishing industry and tourism.

The district being surrounded by water was a point of concern with regards to the increase of coastal flooding.

"It's an important issue," Van Drew said. He mentioned that products of dredging could be used to help control water coming into sensitive areas and

building higher as well to prevent mold issues.

"We also have to keep our people safe," he said.

Alexander said he hopes to bring experts to the table and come up with the best possible plan.

"We've got to move quickly and we've got to help people preserve their homes," he said.

Inflation and Poverty

Inflation is rising across American and impacting the people of South Jersey. Van Drew told the audience that they could blame it all on Biden and the Democratic party spending it on "woke nonsense."

He said that it was caused by not allowing production of oil and "very clean" natural gas and had to go to other countries. Van Drew added that supply chain issues caused by China also contributed to the issue.

"Facts matter," Alexander told him. "And the reality here is that inflation is a worldwide phenomenon. It's hurting everywhere."

Alexander said that he too was impacted by inflation, and a way to help would be lowering gas prices. He said that Biden did release some of the strategic oil reserves but "he didn't go far enough."

He argued for significant investments in battery technology, making it easier to buy electric vehicles. Alexander said that America should be a leader.

"Every single member of Congress should be fighting for ways to reduce the costs for us every single day," he said. "And instead of sitting on our hands and complaining about everything, do something."

South Jersey has also suffered from higher poverty and unemployment rates than most of the state for years. Alexander asked why things don't change and how he could help.

"We haven't had anybody champion for us in Washington in decades and decades," Alexander said, directly targeting Van Drew.

Alexander said he would fight to bring resources home and make them work for the community, and conceded that the bipartisan infrastructure bill Van Drew voted for was a "great way" to do that.

Van Drew said that he had worked to bring half a billion dollars worth of projects to South Jersey, developing jobs and supporting the South Jersey economy.

Police Reforms

"One of the reasons why I got started in this process is because I saw the travesty of Derek Chauvin murdering George Floyd for all the world to see," Alexander said. As a retired police officer himself, he acknowledged that "the vast majority of law enforcement personnel are good, honorable people."

But, Alexander said that he has a comprehensive training reform plan, as he said part of the issue with Floyd's death was that Chauvin was training new officers that day. "That is a dysfunctional norm in that particular department. That has to change."

The key is that before a new officer gets the power, the badge and the gun, they must first do a year of community service, Alexander said. That way, the officer starts off knowing and being connected with the community.

Van Drew said that he stands by police, and said that Alexander would not say that he believes in diminishing or defunding the police.

"But his organization and all the people around it have," Van Drew said.

He also touted his endorsements by the Fraternal Order of Police and the PBA.

"I will stand by our men and women in blue, no matter what," he said. "And that doesn't mean they never made a mistake."

The 2nd District election will include the towns under the redrawn districts that take effect in 2023, following the redistricting resulting from the 2020 Census.

[See the new map here.](#)

The 2nd District will contain all of Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland and Salem Counties. It will also contain from Gloucester County: Logan, Swedesboro, Woolwich, Harrison, South Harrison, Elk, Clayton, Franklin, Newfield and part of East Greenwich. And from Ocean County: Little Egg Harbor, Tuckerton, Beach Haven, Long Beach, Eagleswood, Ship Bottom, Stafford, Surf City, Barnegat, Barnegat Light, Harvey Cedars, Ocean Township (Waretown) and parts of Berkeley and Lacey.

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