

## **GOP Inaction Motivates Challenger**

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HARRISONBURG — Harry Griego has some harsh words for the Republican leadership in Washington, D.C.

"These guys are a do-nothing Congress," the 55-year-old Roanoke County Republican said.

Griego doesn't lay all the blame on the other side of the aisle, which is why he is challenging 12-term U.S. Rep. Bob Goodlatte, R-Roanoke, for the 6th Congressional District GOP nomination. A primary election will be held June 14.

Griego announced his intention to run about a month ago but did not make himself available for an interview with the Daily News-Record until Wednesday.

The 6th District covers much of western Virginia, stretching from Roanoke County in the south to Warren County to the north, including Rockingham County and Harrisonburg.

Goodlatte's first term in the U.S. House of Representatives began in 1993. Since then, he has soundly defeated every challenger: Election records show Goodlatte generally receiving 60 percent or more of the vote, and he has often run unopposed.

But Griego's is only the second time Goodlatte has faced a primary challenge.

Shenandoah County resident Karen Kwiatkowski challenged him in 2012. Goodlatte beat her with 66 percent of the vote and ran unopposed in November.

No Democratic candidates have yet declared their intent to run in this year's election.

Griego, meanwhile, has a short political resume, something he said is an advantage.

"We the people delegate authority to the government," he said. "It's supposed to be for us, not for career politicians."

Griego unsuccessfully challenged Del. Chris Head, R-Roanoke, for the 17th District House of Delegates Republican nomination last year, and he said the experience was a launching pad for his current campaign.

"I knocked on about 3,500 doors in the district," he said, "and so many people were disappointed in the party leadership."

A representative for Goodlatte did not respond to a request for comment on this story.

Born in New Mexico, Griego served in the Air Force for 23 years and received 13 medals and commendations over his career, according to his website.

After leaving the military, Griego continued flying as both a commercial and private pilot. He now flies for Connecticut-based private airliner Gama Aviation.

"I believe in serving your country out of your own free will," he said, citing his "sense of duty" as what made him decide to run.

### **On The Issues**

Like the incumbent, Griego wants to see the country's immigration system reformed, though he says he does not support a complete freeze on immigration.

"I understand why people cross the border," he said, "but the United States has the right to be sovereign. Taking care of illegal immigrants is not the taxpayers' responsibility."

He said the Obama administration looks at immigrants as "a commodity," not humans.

"They see these people as new voters and new taxpayers, and a way to get more power for themselves and the establishment," he said.

Griego also believes Congress should do more to defund Planned Parenthood, an issue Goodlatte has championed in recent months.

"I've been to protests outside Planned Parenthood, and I've never seen [Goodlatte]," Griego said.

He also criticized Goodlatte and the rest of Congress for not attempting to fight President Barack Obama's "tyrannical use of executive orders."

"[Goodlatte] isn't doing anything," he said, "and people are looking for leadership."

Griego also said he would work to balance the federal budget and remove the Patriot Act, which he said endangers Americans' civil liberties.

"I would try to do something, instead of blindly following party lines," he said. "We need to defund Obamacare and Planned Parenthood, and I'll fight to do it."

Griego, who says he is a constitutionalist before a Republican, thinks his experience as a pilot would help him if elected to Congress.

"When you fly, you have checklists, and you need to adhere to them," he said. "In politics, the checklist is the Constitution, and leaders don't follow it. I won't ignore the Constitution."

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