

Who's Running for Congressional District 19 in the August Primaries?

By Sandy Parker | Sparker's Soapbox | Published 2026-07-12

Florida's 19th Congressional District is an open seat this year, since incumbent Republican Byron Donalds is not seeking re-election, running for Governor instead. Ten Republicans and three Democrats qualified for the Aug. 18, 2026, primary ballot. Both parties will hold closed partisan primaries, meaning they are open only to registered voters of the respective party. The Republican and Democratic nominees, along with two additional candidates who qualified outside the party primaries, will face off in the November general election.

- [Republican Candidates](#)
- [Democratic Candidates](#)

Research and campaign finance data for this post were compiled with assistance from Claude (Anthropic AI), drawing on the Florida Division of Elections, candidate websites, and Florida news sources. All information was reviewed and verified by the author.

Republican Candidates

Greg “Tex” Bukowski

Bio

Greg “Tex” Bukowski was born in 1978 in Harrisburg, PA, to a father who worked as an engineer in the U.S. steel industry and NASA's space program and a mother who immigrated from Germany. He grew up in Southern California and holds a bachelor's degree in economics and German from Northwestern University, along with an MBA. Early in his career, he worked in football operations for the Philadelphia Eagles and the University of Southern California before founding Moldman and the Water Boys, a mold and water damage restoration franchise, in 2006.

He moved to Southwest Florida in 2015, where he has since owned a restaurant and been elected to the Sarasota County Charter Review Board (2025-2026). He picked up the nickname “Tex” from the local tennis community after moving to Florida from Texas. He is married to Olga Bukowski and has two daughters ([votefortex.com](https://www.votefortex.com)).

Platform

Bukowski's campaign slogan is "What MAGA was supposed to be." The [campaign website](#) frames his candidacy around a series of "for" and "against" tags:

FOR

- America First!
- Bringing the Jobs Back
- Cleaning Up Our Cities
- Destroying the Deep State
- DOGE
- Draining the Swamp
- Elections That Can't Be Rigged
- Empowering Small Business
- Ending the Massive Fraud
- Epstein Truth
- Improving Public Education
- Legal & Limited Immigration
- Locking Up Criminals
- Lower Debt & Deficits
- Lower Taxes
- Lowering the Cost of Healthcare
- MAHA

AGAINST

- Big AI Data Centers
- Big Special Interest Money
- Bloated Budgets
- Child Sex Trafficking
- Corruption
- Foreign Aid
- Fraud
- Inflation
- Insider Trading
- Meddling In Other Countries
- Open Borders
- War
- Wokeness

Endorsements

No endorsements were listed on his campaign website or in public sources as of Jul. 10, 2026.

Further Research

1. Campaign website: votefortex.com
2. Active social media: none found as of Jul. 8, 2026.

In the News

- Charter Review Board District 4: Greg "Tex" Bukowski. ([Your Observer](#), 7/24/24)

Madison Cawthorn

Bio

Madison Cawthorn attended Patrick Henry College. He worked as a staffer for U.S. Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) and owned and worked for the investment firm SPQR LLC. He was elected to represent North Carolina's 11th Congressional District in 2020 and served in the U.S. House from 2021 to 2023 ([Ballotpedia](#); [Biographical Directory of the United States Congress](#)).

Platform

Cawthorn's campaign website says he is a proven fighter and uses the slogan "Join the fight!" Its dedicated [Issues page](#) is organized under four named headings:

- Border Security
- Foreign Aid
- 2nd Amendment
- End Woke Ideology

Endorsements

According to his website, Cawthorn was endorsed by "prominent Naples Republican" Johnny Fratto and Naples Fire Commissioner Patrick Dearborn ([madisoncawthorn.com](#)).

Further Research

1. Campaign website: [madisoncawthorn.com](#)
2. Active social media: [Facebook](#), [X](#), [YouTube](#)

In the News

- Former Rep. Madison Cawthorn launches congressional comeback attempt in new state. ([NBC News](#), 10/1/25)
- 'No Way': Trumpworld Won't Help Madison Cawthorn Attempt a Political Comeback. ([NOTUS](#), 10/3/25)

Chris Collins

Bio

Chris Collins holds a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from North Carolina State University and a master's degree in business from the University of Alabama. He worked as an engineer and businessman in manufacturing, served as Erie County, NY, Executive from 2007 to 2011, and represented

New York's 27th Congressional District from 2013 until his Oct. 2019 resignation, after being charged with insider trading and pleading guilty; President Trump pardoned him in Dec. 2020 (collinsfl19.com/about; [Biographical Directory of the United States Congress](#); [Roll Call](#), 1/23/26).

Platform

Collins's campaign [website](#) says he is "The Original Trump Conservative," "standing with President Trump since day one." Its dedicated [Issues page](#) is organized under seven named headings:

- Secure Our Borders, Streets & Communities
- Protect Our Families From Deadly Drugs & Crimes
- Stop Biological Men From Competing In Women's Sports
- Restore Our Nation As A Leader On The World Stage
- Defend Our Conservative Values & Freedom
- Oppose Liberal Tax Hikes & Woke Policy Priorities
- Unleash America's Economic Potential

Endorsements

No endorsements were confirmed on his campaign website or in public sources as of Jul. 10, 2026.

Further Research

1. Campaign website: collinsfl19.com
2. Active social media: [Facebook](#), [X](#)

In the News

- Former New York Rep. Chris Collins, pardoned by Trump, seeks comeback in Florida. ([Roll Call](#), 1/23/26)
- Chris Collins touts himself as 'original' Donald Trump conservative in latest TV ad. ([Florida Politics](#), 7/8/26)

Ola Hawatmeh

Bio

Ola Hawatmeh was born in the United States to Christian immigrant parents from Jordan and holds a bachelor's degree from Marist University. She is the founder and CEO of Mom Me Makeover and Ola Style, and has spent the past year as a Senior Policy Advisor to U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz (R-Ind.) in Washington, D.C. She previously ran unsuccessfully in the 2020 Republican primary for New York's 19th Congressional District ([Florida Politics](#), 6/27/26; [LinkedIn](#); [Washington Examiner](#), 1/30/26).

Platform

Hawatmeh's campaign [website](#) calls her a "Proven Fighter for MAGA" who "will fight for President Trump's agenda and put Southwest Florida first in every vote." Its [Issues page](#) ("Federal Firepower for FL-19") is organized under four named headings:

- Real Experience, Real Results
- Bring Federal Dollars Home
- Protect Southwest Florida
- Stand for Our Communities

Endorsements

- **National leaders:** U.S. Reps. John McGuire and Marlin Stutzman ([campaign website](#)).
- **State leaders:** Florida state Rep. Meg Weinberger ([campaign website](#); [Florida Politics](#), 1/20/26).
- **National figures:** Stephen Moore, economist and Trump policy adviser ([Florida Politics](#), 4/7/26).
- **Organizations:** Florida State Hispanic Chamber of Commerce ([Florida Politics](#), 4/7/26); Moms for America Action ([Florida Politics](#), 4/24/26).

Further Research

1. Campaign website: olaforcongress.com
2. Active social media: [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#) (bio still references her 2020 New York campaign), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#)

In the News

- Florida MAGA bastion draws comeback from ex-lawmakers who once represented other states. ([Washington Examiner](#), 1/30/26)
- With background in legislating and philanthropy, Ola Hawatmeh says she best serves CD 19's needs. ([Florida Politics](#), 6/27/26)

Catalina Lauf

Bio

Catalina Lauf holds a bachelor's degree in communications, journalism, and political science from Miami University. She was a special advisor to the U.S. Department of Commerce during the first Trump administration, founded the Defense of Freedom PAC, and co-founded Begin Health with her sister. She ran unsuccessfully for Illinois' 14th Congressional District in 2020 and Illinois' 11th Congressional District in 2022, and now lives in Bonita Springs, FL, with her husband (catalinaforcongress.com; [Ballotpedia](#); [LinkedIn](#)).

Platform

Lauf's campaign says she is "running to bring a new generation of servant leadership to Congress — leaders in the spirit of Congressman Byron Donalds who stand up fearlessly for our values," unlike "career politicians and recycled candidates." Its [platform](#) is organized into five categories:

- Pro Economic Growth Policies
- Pro Strong Border Politics
- Pro MAHA Movement
- Pro SWFL Infrastructure
- A New Generation of Leadership

Endorsements

- U.S. Sen. Jim Banks
- U.S. Rep. Burgess Owens
- U.S. Rep. Anna Paulina Luna

(Source: [Florida Politics](#), 2/11/26.)

Further Research

1. Campaign website: catalinaforcongress.com
2. Active social media: [Facebook](#), [X](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#)

In the News

- After months of speculation, Catalina Lauf jumps into race to succeed Byron Donalds in CD 19. ([Florida Politics](#), 10/3/25)

Jim Oberweis

Bio

Jim Oberweis holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and a master's degree from the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business. He was a math and science teacher and chairman of Oberweis Dairy, founded Oberweis Asset Management and the Oberweis Foundation, and served in the Illinois State Senate (District 25) from 2013 to 2021. He has run unsuccessfully for U.S. Senate in Illinois (2002, 2004, 2014), Governor of Illinois (2006), and Illinois' 14th Congressional District (2008, 2020) ([Illinois General Assembly](#); [Wikipedia](#)).

Platform

Oberweis's campaign describes him as "a successful entrepreneur, business leader, and philanthropist." Its [website](#) has a dedicated "Issues" page organized under thirteen named headings:

- Fiscal Sanity
- No Budget No Pay
- School Choice
- Term Limits
- Marriage / Gender / Women's Sports
- First Amendment Free Expression Rights
- Border Security & Immigration System Reform
- The Florida Environment / Natural Disasters
- Reforming The IRS & Tax Code
- USA Energy Independence
- Poverty Reduction / Helping Hands

Endorsements

The website lists a broad roster of local supporters rather than a discrete set of institutional endorsements; no single endorsement from a sitting elected official or major organization specific to this race was confirmed as of Jul. 2, 2026 (votejimo.com/endorsements).

Further Research

1. Campaign website: votejimo.com
2. Active social media: [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [Truth Social](#)

In the News

- Jim Oberweis starts 2026 with nearly \$3M cash on hand for CD 19 race. ([Florida Politics](#), 1/30/26)

Mike Pedersen

Bio

Mike Pedersen was born in Long Beach, CA, and attended the U.S. Naval Academy, graduating in 1979. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1979 to 1999 as a Naval Flight Officer, graduated from the Navy's TOPGUN Fighter Weapons School, and flew 66 combat missions over Kuwait during Operation Desert Storm, earning three individual awards for personal valor. From 1992 to 1994, he served as Executive Officer at Camp Pendleton, CA (mikepedersenforcongress.com).

After his military service, Pedersen spent 22 years in pharmaceutical sales, primarily in women's healthcare, across Southwest Florida. He has been a Cape Coral, FL, resident for more than 26 years and was a youth boxing coach with the Cape Coral Police and a wrestling coach at Mariner High. He is married to Elsa Pedersen and has three adult children and eight grandchildren. This is his first candidacy for elected office; he announced his campaign in May 2025 with a skydiving launch event at Lake Dora (mikepedersenforcongress.com; [Florida Politics](#), 5/11/25).

Platform

Pedersen's [Home page](#) quotes the candidate: "Semper Fi isn't just a motto – it's how I'll serve you in Congress." The campaign's [Platform page](#) lists eight named priorities:

- USA First. Always
- Unmatched Military with Capabilities Second to None
- Continue the DOGE Mission
- Secure Borders
- Secure Elections
- Protect 2nd Amendment. Shall Not Be Infringed!
- Debt Reduction. Grow Economy
- Protect and Develop Our Youth

Endorsements

- **Military leaders:** Retired Maj. Gen. James L. Dozier, U.S. Army ([Florida's Voice](#), 3/13/26); Gen. W.L. "Spider" Nyland, USMC (Ret.); Lt. Gen. Thomas McInerney, U.S. Air Force (Ret.); Maj. Gen. Paul E. Vallely, U.S. Army (Ret.); Robert "Bob" Harward ([campaign website](#)).
- **State leaders:** Florida state Rep. Quang Nguyen ([Ballotpedia](#), citing campaign website).

Additional endorsers appear in campaign website photos without legible names or titles and could not be independently identified.

Further Research

1. Campaign website: mikepedersenforcongress.com
2. Active social media: [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#)

In the News

- Mike Pedersen makes leap — literally — into growing CD 19 field. ([Florida Politics](#), 5/11/25)
- Retired Maj. Gen. James Dozier endorses Mike Pedersen for Florida's 19th Congressional seat. ([Florida's Voice](#), 3/13/26)

Linda Sawyer

Bio

Linda Sawyer was born in Redford Township, MI, and studied engineering at Michigan Technological University and nursing at Northern Michigan University. She held several healthcare-related positions over the years; most recently, according to one of her two LinkedIn profiles, as a clinical research coordinator at the University of Michigan (1995-2015). She served as a committee member of the Wayne County Republican Party and was a delegate to the Michigan and national Republican conventions.

Sawyer has had a part-time home in North Fort Myers, FL, since 1978, and previously ran for office several times in Michigan without success. (lindasawyer.com/about-linda; [LinkedIn](#); [LinkedIn/votewithlinda](#)).

Platform

Sawyer's [website](#) describes her as "a Trump supporting, gun-carrying evangelical constitutionalist." It says [her platform](#) is "the United States Constitution" the Republican Platform, and elaborates on the following:

- Affordable Healthcare
- Election Integrity
- Federal Money Back into Our communities
- Islamification of America
- Farming and Agriculture
- Public Safety
- Foreign Land Ownership
- Border Security
- Mental Health
- Disabilities
- Job Description
- Covid mRNA Vaccines
- Environment and Water
- Infrastructure
- Term Limits
- Stop Sanctuary Cities
- Education
- Legal Immigration
- EMTALA Revision
- Abortion

Regarding healthcare, she would "cut out the middleman, sell meds at cost, and put patients first, not insurance companies." She is a supporter of the Direct Primary Care Coalition. About "Islamification of America," she says, "America First isn't about where you come from. It's about putting our values, our families, and our communities first." (lindasawyer.com)

Endorsements

No endorsements specific to her 2026 FL-19 campaign were found as of Jul. 6, 2026.

Further Research

1. Active social media: [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#)

In the News

- Crowded field of candidates vie for two U.S. Congressional districts representing SWFL. ([WGCU News](#), 6/15/26)

Jim Schwartzel

Bio

Schwartzel is a lifelong resident of Southwest Florida who graduated from Bishop Verot High School. He is President of Sun Broadcasting, Inc. and Gulfshore Life Media, LLC. The two media organizations own and operate numerous local radio, TV and publishing businesses. These include 92.5 FOX News, a conservative talk radio station, Gulfshore Life Media, which publishes Gulfshore Life and Gulfshore Business magazines, and The Naples Press. He is married to Carly Schwartzel, his high school sweetheart; they have two children, one attending Stetson University and the other enrolled at Florida SouthWestern State College. (jimforcongress.com; [Press Club of Southwest Florida](#)).

Platform

Schwartzel's [website](#) highlights "Patriot.... Conservative.... and Trump Country 93.7 Make Country Great Again!" Its dedicated [Issues page](#) is organized under eight named headings:

- Putting America First and Supporting President Trump
- Protecting Southwest Florida's Water Quality
- Improving Infrastructure and Easing Traffic
- Securing the Border and Stopping Illegal Immigration
- Fighting for Term Limits
- Strengthening the Economy and Creating Jobs
- Defending Constitutional Liberties
- Protecting Family Values and Pushing Back on Woke Ideology

Endorsements

No endorsements were listed on his campaign website or in public sources as of Jul. 10, 2026.

Further Research

1. Campaign website: jimforcongress.com
2. Active social media: [Facebook](#), [X](#), [YouTube](#)

In the News

- Jim Schwartzel starts 2026 with \$1.28 million war chest in race for Florida's 19th District. ([Florida's Voice](#), 2/2/26)
- Radio station owned by Jim Schwartzel misidentifies CD 19 opponent Ola Hawatmeh as an immigrant. ([Florida Politics](#), 4/21/26)

John Strand

Bio

John Strand was born in California, raised in a Christian household, and had a father who served in the U.S. Navy. Before 2020, he worked as a model and actor, with reported contracts with Wilhelmina Models and Envy Models and appearances on reality programs including Vanderpump Rules and Breaking Amish: LA. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he became Creative Director and national spokesperson for America's Frontline Doctors, an organization founded by Dr. Simone Gold. He is the author of Patriot Plea: The J6 Journey of a Political Prisoner in the Divided States of America. He moved from California to Florida in 2022 and is an active member of Grow Church Naples (johnstrand.com/profile.html; [Rolling Stone](#), 9/27/22).

Strand was convicted by a jury on five charges related to the Jan. 6, 2021, events at the U.S. Capitol and was sentenced to 32 months in prison. He was released in 2024 after the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Fischer v. United States* narrowed the felony obstruction statute; his four misdemeanor convictions were not described as vacated, and his broader appeal to the D.C. Circuit was reported as still pending as of 7/26/24, the most recent reporting found on its status. Strand's campaign describes him as having been "vindicated by the Supreme Court" and having achieved "total exoneration of all charges," with "zero charges remaining"; that characterization is broader than what the available court record and news reporting confirm ([Rolling Stone](#), 9/27/22; [Washington Times](#), 7/29/24; [Blaze Media](#), 7/26/24; johnstrand.com).

Platform

Strand's [website](#) calls him "The Maverick Conservative." "Courage to fight. Wisdom to lead." Its "[Targets](#)" page lists "Ten Targets. One Fight":

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Secure the Border.
Defend Our Sovereignty. | • Constitutional
Governance. |
| • Election Integrity and
Citizen Representation. | • Draining the Swamp of
Corruption and Tyranny. |
| • Economic Prosperity
Through Fiscal
Responsibility. | • Energy Dominance and
Climate Truth. |
| • Protecting Our Culture
and Preserving Our
Values. | • Solving the Insurance
Insanity. |
| • Water Quality and
Environmental
Management. | • Keeping Southwest
Florida Free and
Thriving. |

Endorsements

Per the campaign's Endorsements page (checked directly, 7/9/26):

- **National leaders:** Gen. Michael Flynn, U.S. Army (Ret.), former National Security Advisor; U.S. Rep. Lauren Boebert; former U.S. Rep. Bob McEwen.
- **Local leaders:** Southwest Florida businessman Alfie Oakes.
- **National organizations:** Turning Point Action.
- **National figures:** author Dennis Prager; Silk, of Diamond and Silk; physician Dr. Robert Malone; author/host Eric Metaxas; Bill Mitchell; Nick Searcy; Glenn Story; Cara Castonuova; the account DataRepublican (two separate posts); Julie Kelly; Pastor Lorenzo Sewell, 180 Church Detroit; Mike Lindell; and Juanita Broadrick.

Almost all of these endorsements are sourced to posts from Strand's own campaign account rather than the endorser's own account or a published statement ([campaign website](#)).

Further Research

1. Campaign website: johnstrand.com
2. Active social media: [X](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#)

In the News

- MAGA Derek Zoolander Convicted for Role in Capitol Riot. ([Rolling Stone](#), 9/27/22)
- Former prisoner John Strand released from January 6 'hell on earth' by Supreme Court ruling. ([Blaze Media](#), 7/26/24)
- John Strand, Jan. 6 defendant, said he endured four months of solitary in federal prison. ([Washington Times](#), 7/29/24)
- John Strand announces candidacy for Congress at Florida CD-19 launch event. ([Your News](#), 1/20/26)

Republican Campaign Finances

Of note:

- **Bukowski:** A late entrant in the race (6/4/26); has not filed an FEC report as of 7/12/26.
- **Cawthorn:** \$500,000, or 96 percent of receipts, is a personal loan to his campaign. Thirty-three percent of itemized individual contributions were from Florida donors; 67 percent were from out of state, led by the District of Columbia and Tennessee.
- **Collins:** Nearly all receipts are personal loans to his campaign; none are from individual donors.
- **Hawatmeh:** \$113,325, or 30 percent of receipts, was transferred from her prior authorized campaign committee, a standard practice when candidates move between offices. Seventeen percent of itemized

individual contributions came from Florida donors; 83 percent came from out of state, led by New York.

- **Lauf:** \$575,027, or 59 percent of receipts, came from unitemized contributions of less than \$200, the FEC threshold for itemized donor disclosure. Twenty-four percent of itemized individual contributions came from Florida donors; 76 percent came from out of state, led by Texas.
- In addition, Protect Freedom PAC reported \$37,540 in independent expenditures supporting Lauf as of Jul. 12, 2026. Independent expenditures are not coordinated with candidates and are not included in the campaign finance totals above. No other Super PAC independent expenditure activity was identified for Republican CD 19 candidates.
- **Oberweis:** \$4,000,000, or 92 percent of receipts, is a personal loan to his campaign. Sixty-one percent of itemized individual contributions came from Florida donors; 39 percent came from out of state, led by Illinois.
- **Schwartzel:** \$1,000,000, or 58 percent of receipts, is a personal loan to his campaign. Eighty-three percent of itemized individual contributions came from Florida donors; 17 percent came from out of state, led by Ohio. Sun Broadcasting, of which he is president, was his largest single-employer source of contributions, at \$44,872.

For complete campaign finance data, see the [CD 19 race page on OpenSecrets](#). OpenSecrets 2026 industry-level data for this race was not yet available as of the publication date.

Campaign finance data was compiled from Federal Election Commission filings using Claude Cowork and cross-checked against FEC source records by the author. Data through Jul. 12, 2026.

Democratic Candidates

Victor Arias

Bio

Victor Arias received a Bachelor of Arts from Hamilton College in Clinton, NY, and a Juris Doctor degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He has been the owner and managing attorney of Arias Law Firm since 1992, representing working families in personal injury, workers' compensation, and school law cases in Southwest Florida. He ran unsuccessfully for Lee County Superintendent of Schools in 2024. He is a member of Leadership Florida (Class XIII), Leadership Lee County, Leadership Cape Coral, and Leadership Estero, and has been a member of Covenant Presbyterian Church since 1999, where he serves as an Elder and on the Board of Trustees. He has been married to his wife Angelette for 32 years; they have twins, each attending university ([voterfocus](#); [LinkedIn](#); [votearias.us](#))

Platform

Arias's campaign used a five-part "UNITY" platform: Unifying Our Community; Negotiating Bipartisan Reform; Improving Our Environment and Economy; Transforming Healthcare; Yielding Results for Veterans. (votearias.us)

Note

Arias's campaign website votearias.us was suspended "because of an unpaid balance" as of 7/10/26. References to votearias.us were recovered with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence from archived/ search-indexed campaign webpages.

Endorsements

No endorsements were found in public sources as of Jul. 10, 2026.

Further Research

1. Active social media: [Facebook](#); [LinkedIn](#)

In the News

No news coverage specific to Victor Arias's 2026 campaign was found as of Jul. 9, 2026.

Robert Neeld

Bio

Robert Neeld is a Cape Coral, FL, accountant whose family moved to Southwest Florida in 1956; he has been self-employed for more than 30 years as a tax preparer and recordkeeper. He previously ran for Congress in Florida's then-numbered 14th Congressional District in 2004, 2006, and 2016, each time receiving more than 30% of the vote as a Democrat in a heavily Republican district while emphasizing economic issues. He later ran unsuccessfully for the Lee Memorial Health System Board, District 2, in 2018 and for Lee County Sheriff in 2020 (WGCU, via [American Archive of Public Broadcasting](#); [Legistorm](#); [Ballotpedia](#))

No campaign website was found for his 2026 congressional campaign as of Jul. 8, 2026.

Platform

No platform specific to the CD 19 race was found on a campaign website or in public sources as of Jul. 8, 2026.

Endorsements

No endorsements were found in public sources as of Jul. 8, 2026.

Further Research

1. Campaign website: none found as of Jul. 8, 2026.
2. Active social media: none found as of Jul. 8, 2026.

In the News

No news coverage specific to Robert Neeld's 2026 campaign was found as of Jul. 9, 2026. Previously:

- Newcomers Rooney and Neeld differ on security, taxes, [Naples Daily News](#), 10/27/16
-

Howard Sapp

Bio

Rev. Howard Sapp currently serves as CEO of the Source of Light and Hope Development Center, a nonprofit organization providing emergency shelter and residential programs for at-risk youth in foster care, ages 13–18. He is a lifelong Fort Myers, FL, native and a retired air traffic controller with the Federal Aviation Administration, finishing his FAA career in a management capacity at FAA headquarters in Washington, D.C. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and Chemistry from Edward Waters College and a Bachelor of Arts in Theological Studies from Northwestern University.

Sapp is also an award-winning gospel artist, the nephew of the late Fort Myers City Councilwoman Veronica Shoemaker, and the son-in-law of former Lee County Commissioner Melvin Morgan. He was the first candidate to file for this seat after Byron Donalds announced his run for Governor, and previously ran for the Florida House against incumbent Republican Rep. Jenna Persons-Mulicka in House District 78 in 2022 and 2024, winning about 40% of the vote in the more recent race (hsapp4congress.com; [Florida Politics](#)).

Platform

Sapp's campaign [website](#) refers to him as “Reverend Howard Sapp: Honesty. Integrity. Accountability. Unity.”

Its [Issues page](#) lists nine named issue categories:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| • Affordable Housing | • Clean Water |
| • Education | • Economy |
| • Healthcare | • Insurance |
| • Women's Rights | • Equality for All |
| • Worker Protections | |

Endorsements

According to his [campaign website](#), his endorsers include:

- Lee County Young Democrats
- Vote Common Good

Further Research

1. Campaign website: hsapp4congress.com
2. Active social media: [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#)

In the News

- Howard Sapp becomes first candidate to file for Byron Donalds' seat in Congress. ([Florida Politics](#), 2/27/25)
- Fort Myers native Howard Sapp to run for Congress. ([Gulf Coast News](#), 4/3/25; original page currently unavailable to some users; via hsapp4congress.com)

Democratic Campaign Finances

Of note:

- **Arias:** \$20,000, or 78 percent of receipts, is a personal loan to his campaign. Of the \$3,050 in itemized individual contributions, \$1,650, or 54 percent, came from Florida donors.
- **Neeld: Through** 6/30/26, a \$15,000 personal loan is the sole source of funding for the campaign.
- **Sapp: Through 3/31/26, 67 percent of itemized individual contributions came from Florida donors; 33 percent came from out-of-state donors.** Ending cash is negative.

Summary

Florida's 19th Congressional District is an open seat this year, with ten Republicans and three Democrats on the Aug. 18, 2026 primary ballot, plus two additional candidates who advance directly to November. The Republican and Democratic nominees, along with two additional candidates who qualified outside the party primaries, will face off in the November general election.