

# White supremacist congressman Steve King defeated in Republican primary

By Patrick Martin  
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Representative Steve King, the closest thing to an open fascist in the US Congress, was defeated in the Republican primary in the Fourth Congressional District of Iowa, likely ending his 18-year congressional tenure. He lost to state senator Randy Feenstra by a margin of 46 percent to 36 percent, with three other candidates drawing votes.

Feenstra will face Democrat J.D. Scholten in the November election in a district that has elected Republicans for most of its history. It is heavily rural, covering the northwestern quarter of Iowa, with Sioux City the only sizeable urban area. Scholten came within three percentage points of defeating King in 2018, and the House Republican leadership feared losing the seat altogether if King were the nominee again.

King fell out of favor with the Republican leadership in Congress after a series of racist public remarks, many of them directed against immigrants. He once claimed that undocumented immigrants had “calves the size of cantaloupes” because they were carrying heavy loads of marijuana and other drugs into the country.

He expressed support for an openly white supremacist candidate for the mayoralty of Toronto, Faith Goldy, and traveled to Europe to hobnob with neo-fascists in Italy and neo-Nazis in Germany, although this earned him merely a verbal reprimand from then-House Speaker John Boehner.

The last straw came in a 2018 interview with the *New York Times*, in which King complained that terms like “white nationalism” and “white supremacy” were receiving unwarranted criticism. The House passed a formal resolution of censure against King but did not expel him from his seat. The Republican leadership then stripped King of committee assignments and allowed him to do nothing more than cast votes on legislation.

It was the public flamboyance of King’s racism that was the problem for the Republican leadership. Such expressions in private are commonplace in right-wing circles, and the Trump White House is a hotbed of such language, directed at both immigrants and racial minorities, but usually behind closed doors.

Feenstra’s campaign did not actually denounce King’s racism, only the consequent loss of influence in the House because of the congressman’s unrestrained public statements. Feenstra embraced the same right-wing political agenda as King, including anti-abortion, gun rights and opposition to gay marriage, as well as all-out support for President Trump. House Republicans made no secret of their desire to be rid of King, and Feenstra enjoyed a nearly three-to-one advantage in fundraising over an incumbent congressman, as well as endorsements from the US Chamber of Commerce and the National Right to Life Committee.

Donald Trump had a close relationship to King even before his 2016 presidential campaign. They shared a viciously anti-immigrant stance, and both supported the building of a wall on the US-Mexico border. While King supported Senator Ted Cruz in the 2016 primaries, he became a frequent visitor to the Trump White House and a fervent advocate of Trump’s policies. His reward was a cold shoulder this year and a Trump tweet celebrating Feenstra’s victory.

In the Senate contest in Iowa, real estate millionaire Theresa Greenfield won the Democratic primary to run against incumbent Republican Senator Joni Ernst. Greenfield took 46 percent of the vote in a four-candidate field, with runner-up Mike Franken, a retired Navy admiral, trailing with 26 percent. Greenfield was the choice of the national party establishment, which poured in millions of dollars to

back her campaign.

Iowa was only one of eight states and the District of Columbia that held primary elections on June 2. In all of them, the majority of votes were cast by mail ballot, and because of delays in processing and counting the mail ballots, many of the closer contests for Republican and Democratic nominations were still undecided 24 hours after the polls closed. Even longer delays can be expected in any general election conducted in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

In a widely publicized primary contest in New Mexico, attorney Teresa Leger Fernandez, an advocate for Hispanic and Native American groups, defeated former CIA agent Valerie Plame for the Democratic nomination in the Third Congressional District. The safe Democratic seat is being vacated by Representative Ben Ray Lujan, who is heavily favored to win the US Senate seat held by retiring Senator Tom Udall. Plame came to public attention when her role as an agent was leaked by the Bush White House in retaliation for public criticism of the war in Iraq by her late husband, former diplomat Joe Wilson.

Seven states and the District of Columbia held presidential primaries, and former Vice President Joe Biden won each of the contests, with the other candidates still on the ballot having quit the race and endorsed him. Biden now has roughly 1,900 delegates to the Democratic National Convention, just short of the 1,991 officially required for the nomination.

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