

Dr. David Brill campaigns for Congress in Cottonwood

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In 2016, U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar won Congressional District 4 in Arizona by 43 percentage points.

In 2018, Dr. Daniel Brill, the Democratic nominee for District 4 challenging Gosar, said that despite that, he can win.

“I’m a strong contender,” Brill said. According Brill, while his campaign was behind Gosar’s in fundraising by a 2-to-1 margin as of June 30, he feels that he has been gaining on Gosar, and pointed out that this was much better than the 20-to-1 fundraising gap of Gosar’s 2016 challenger.

He also cited internal polling that showed only 37 percent of District 4 residents had a favorable opinion for Gosar, far lower than the 71.5 percent of the vote he received in 2016.

“I would love to debate him,” Brill said. “He’s already turned down one debate, and I don’t think he’s debated in his eight years in Congress. I think he’s afraid to debate, but if we can get him to debate, the voters can then see the two candidates and compare them, and we can go from there.”

Brill spent Saturday, Sept. 29, in the Verde Valley, working on that uphill battle against the four-term Republican congressman. He spent most of the day at Verde River Day in Dead Horse Ranch State Park, before attending a local fundraiser at a house of a Clarkdale elected official.

On policy, Brill describes himself as a “Democratic capitalist” and argues that his moderate policy views could entice voters even in a reliably Republican district like District 4. He cites his past experience as a teacher as inspiration for his belief that schools need more funding, and a goal of using the federal government to help equalize education dollars for schools in rural areas.

Brill cites his current life as doctor as inspiration for his health care policies, calling for people of all ages to have the option to buy into Medicare instead of private insurance, which he believes would be cheaper for many. He touted an idea for immigration he got from the right-leaning Cato Institute, which would require visa recipients to pay into a bond upon entering the U.S. that they would get back when they leave, discouraging people from staying illegally through visa overstays.

Brill said that in Congress he would work to protect the Verde Valley's natural river, even as he hopes that the area can grow and develop due to viticulture and tourism.

Despite his perhaps quixotic campaign, Brill has grabbed some national attention for a striking ad, where a series of speakers denounce Gosar, asserting he is "absolutely not working for his district," and making similar disparaging claims.

The gut-punch of the ad comes at the end, when the speakers reveal themselves to be Gosar's own siblings.

According to Brill, the campaign got in touch with Gosar's family after seeing a tweet from Dave Gosar attacking the Trump administration's family separation policy towards border crossings, and reached out to him and the rest of the family.

"They wanted their voices to be heard," Brill said of the Gosars. "So they said they would be happy to be interviewed in the press, and that they would also be happy to be interviewed and have their stories in their words available for campaign materials. We didn't script them at all."

"My siblings who chose to film ads against me are all liberal Democrats who hate President Trump," Gosar tweeted in response to the ad. "These disgruntled Hillary supporters [sic] are related by blood to me but like leftists everywhere, they put political ideology before family." He also compared them to late Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

Gosar's brother Dave said that the family did not like speaking out about their brother, but that his recent actions as a congressman — specifically his association with Filip Dewinter, a self-expressed Islamophobic Belgian politician who has celebrated his country's Nazi collaborators, as well as his statements by Paul Gosar after the Charlottesville Nazi march insisting that the marchers were paid by billionaire George Soros — had forced them to speak out.

"He's been a politician for eight years, we said nothing for seven years," Dave Gosar said. "I've disagreed all along, but I've never said anything about it. This isn't about politics. This is about character. He's associating our last name with Nazis."

Brill defends the decision to get up close and personal in attacking Gosar and said families should be fair game.

"He's absolutely perfectly free to call up my family," Brill said. "The big difference is that my family, we don't agree on every issue by any means, but my family doesn't feel that my presence in Congress would be bad for the country."

Despite the direct attacks against Gosar coming in Brill's ads, the candidate insisted he had a positive message for the district.

"If I battle with an opponent, I'm always going to take my response in a positive direction with a vision for our district," Brill said. "We're all sick and tired of politicians arguing with each other and attacking each other without going into the positive."