

McQuilken Challenging Moulton in Sixth Congressional District

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Angus McQuilken spoke at a Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence action day at the State House in 2018. [Photo: Sam Doran/SHNS]

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, NOV. 7, 2019.....Gun reform advocate and life sciences industry booster Angus McQuilken will run for Congress on the North Shore, challenging incumbent U.S. Rep. Seth Moulton, who earlier this year abandoned a run for president.

McQuilken, who announced his plans Thursday, began taking a look at the race in the spring after Moulton said he would run for the White House. He spent the summer touring the 6th Congressional District and meeting with local Democrats to weigh a possible campaign.

"I'm running for Congress because we need a leader who can get results," McQuilken said Thursday in an email announcing his decision.

Moulton dropped out of the race for Democratic nomination for president in August having never qualified for any of the debates, turning his attention back to re-election in 2020 for what could be his fourth term in the House of Representatives.

McQuilken's decision to run comes as other Democrats who had been eyeing Moulton's seat as one that could be vulnerable to a challenge are shifting their focus away from a race against the incumbent.

Salem City Councilor Lisa Peterson last Friday said she was dropping out of the race.

"When I got into this race there was an appetite for a competitive congressional race, but that interest has subsided. I do not want my campaign to take away from the investments needed in races here at home, and throughout the nation," Peterson wrote in an email to supporters, according to Politico.

In May, when Moulton was running for president instead of seeking re-election and coming off his controversial opposition to re-appointing Nancy Pelosi as speaker, McQuilken told the News Service, "I like Seth Moulton. I'm not announcing here that I'm considering a primary challenge. I'm considering running for this office."

McQuilken, a former communications specialist for Planned Parenthood and the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center, said he would run on six main priorities. Those issues include preventing gun violence, addressing climate change, investing in transportation, improving access to affordable health care, strengthening the local economy, and making college more affordable.

"I and the residents of this district are frustrated with the lack of progress in Washington on the issues that are impacting our families and communities," McQuilken said in his statement.

Currently working on life science business development for the Boston law firm McDermott Will & Emery, McQuilken, 50, lives in Topsfield with his wife Diann and their four children.

He worked as an aide in the state Senate to former Sen. Cheryl Jacques, before running and losing state Senate races twice in 2004 to Scott Brown in his only other campaigns for public office.

McQuilken also co-founded the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence and served as deputy communications director for the 2004 Democratic National Convention that took place in Boston when the party nominated John Kerry for president. By focusing his campaign in part on gun violence, McQuilken will go up against a congressman and former Marine Corps. officer in Moulton who helped to lead a push in Congress in 2017 to ban bump stocks.

Another Topsfield Democrat, Jamie Zahlaway Belsito, and Nathaniel Mulcahy of Rockport also have both filed with the FEC to run in the Democratic primary next year.

Moulton's campaign did not comment directly on McQuilken's decision to run, but acknowledged that the Salem Democrat himself challenged an incumbent Democrat and won in 2014. A spokesman said Moulton "looks forward to campaigning."

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