

BREAKING FEATURED

## What's Van Drew to do in a Trumpless term 2?

Michelle Brunetti Post  
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President Donald Trump, right, praises U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-2nd, in January during a rally at the Wildwoods Convention Center. Trump called Van Drew brave and principled for voting against impeachment charges.

Edward Lea / Staff photographer

Michelle Brunetti Post

Van Drew claims victory in 2nd District race for Congress

After a tumultuous freshman term in which he started as a Democrat and ended as a Republican, U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-2nd, pulled off reelection with 52% of the vote in November.

While he has continued voting as a moderate since the election — siding with Democrats on a bill regarding who controls union apprenticeships, and with the Republicans against national legalization of recreational marijuana — this past week he also backed a failed attempt by some Republican-ruled states to delay certifying the results of the presidential election.

“Regardless of whether you like (President) Donald Trump or not ... this election in many ways across the country was not conducted the way it should have been,” Van Drew said, citing some states’ election officials changing rules on how votes would be cast and counted, rather than state legislatures. “It could just as easily in future happen to Democrats.”

His office is researching how to craft legislation to reform the election system, he said.

Van Drew made national headlines in 2019 by switching parties after refusing to vote for Trump’s impeachment, and has since received substantial moral and financial support from the president — through campaign contributions, a Trump rally in Wildwood last January and a speaking role at the 2020 Republican National Convention.



### **Van Drew joins brief seeking delay in finalizing election, Supreme Court says no**

Now, Van Drew faces a second term without Trump in office. The Electoral College meets Monday and is expected to formally elect Joe Biden as the next president.

But in some ways, he is better positioned to help his district now, Van Drew said. No longer a freshman, he has more experience and standing in Congress. And the GOP's gain in the House on Nov. 3 will help him a lot, he said.

"It certainly is a loss," he said of the change in the presidency. "But we gained a lot of seats. We still don't know how many — we're only about 10 away now (from having the majority)."

John Froomjian, executive director of Stockton University's William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy, agreed the momentum seems to be with the Republicans in the House.

"Nothing lasts forever. The (Democratic) majority in the House is pretty slim," Froomjian said. "The opposition party usually gains seats in a midterm election, which is the next election. It could be in two years he finds himself back in the majority on the Republican side."



### **Hospitality industry crisis unites Democrats, Republicans in New Jersey**

Froonjian said the runoff election in Georgia next month to determine who will be that state's U.S. senators, and which party will be in the majority in the Senate, also will have a big impact on Van Drew's future.

"The bigger factor is who charts the course — whether it's Mitch McConnell or Chuck Schumer as Senate majority leader," Froonjian said. "If Republicans are in charge of the Senate, there possibly could be the same kind of obstruction there was in the Obama administration to not pass legislation. It would not let Biden advance his agenda."

Van Drew said he is helping raise money for incumbent Republican Sens. David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler. They are facing Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, respectively, and polls have their races in virtual ties.

Republicans must win at least one of the Georgia seats to retain control in the Senate.

"Even if you are not a hard Republican, you wouldn't want to see both houses (of Congress) and the presidency all the same party," Van Drew said. "If that happens, especially with the Democratic Party we know now as aggressive and progressive, you will see significant changes like court packing and other states being formed — at the very least the state of Washington (D.C.). The country might not be same ever again."



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### **Opening of Cape May County clinic offers veterans long-awaited services**

Even with Trump out of office, Van Drew will likely remain heavily influenced by Trump, Froomjian said.

“Will he have more freedom? I would say no,” Froomjian said of Van Drew’s ability to resist pressure from Trump and his supporters to vote with the GOP on important issues. “Trump will continue to be a factor in Van Drew’s political life. There is no reason not to play to that base. He got reelected. That strategy seems to work in South Jersey.”

Even if Trump himself doesn’t run again in 2024, someone in his family — perhaps Don Jr. — may run, Froomjian said.

“The Trump base is not going away,” he said.

Van Drew said he is moderate to conservative, and Republicans understand that.



### **How your lawmakers voted this week**

“That’s been my nature and always was, even when I was a Democrat,” Van Drew said. “I am not always going to be voting with the party line.”

He has not hesitated in the past to disagree with his own party.

On his first day in office in 2018, while still a Democrat, Van Drew opposed the speakership of U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and soon was arguing for more bipartisanship from Democrats as well as Republicans in an attempt to end the longest closure of the federal government in early 2019.

The climate in Congress is not helpful to moderates like him, he said. Rather than work together to craft legislation likely to get the support of both parties, too often bills are crafted that represent only one side of an issue.

Pandemic relief bills supported by Democrats, he said, have included elements he and most members of the GOP cannot support, he said.



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### **Officials, medical representatives defend 'elective' surgery during pandemic**

“We can’t get this COVID relief we desperately need,” Van Drew said. “Last time, (Democrats) put provisions in the bill that have nothing to do with COVID relief.”

They included programs to release prisoners, funding for the Green New Deal and a requirement to give \$2,500 stimulus checks to undocumented immigrants, he said.

“There you have a bill that was 75% good but 25% horrific, and they put the bill up,” Van Drew said. “What are you going to do?”

He and most other Republicans did not vote for it, he said.

He supports a \$900 billion compromise bill developed by the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus and targeted just to COVID relief, but it has not been put up for a vote yet in the House, he said.

In the Senate, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell was reportedly backing instead a \$500 billion relief bill that had little chance of Democratic support.

Froonjian said Van Drew also is likely to work with the other members of the New Jersey delegation on bills that would benefit the state or regions of the state, even though all but two, including Van Drew, are Democrats.

“He’ll pursue constituent services, bolster personal connections,” Froomjian said.

Van Drew will “have a hard time bringing home the bacon or prizes for the district given his party switch,” Froomjian said, but “the way Van Drew conducts himself in Washington over the next couple of years will determine how long grudges are held.”



Jeff VanDrew celebrates his win to a Congressional seat at the Oar House Restaurant, in Sea Isle City, on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020. (VERNON OGRODNEK / For The Press)

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Jeff Van Drew celebrates his reelection Tuesday at the Oar House Pub in Sea Isle City.

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