

Broome County Conservative Party endorses Battisti in district attorney race

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Republican Paul Battisti is making another bid for Broome County district attorney, setting up a rematch of 2019's GOP primary for the office.

Paul Battisti will appear on the Conservative Party's ballot line in his bid for Broome County district attorney, following a vote by the party's executive committee last month.

The move ensures that Battisti will appear on the ballot in the general election in his attempt to unseat incumbent District Attorney Michael Korchak.

Battisti and Korchak are vying for the Republican nomination, a repeat of their 2019 primary race. In that contest, Korchak was defeated in the primary by Battisti, but succeeded in the general election after securing the Libertarian Party's nomination.

"I'm honored to have our local Conservative Party's support in my campaign for District Attorney," Battisti wrote in a statement to WSKG. "In my interview with the Executive Committee, we discussed our shared concerns about the drastic uptick in crime over the past several years in Broome County. We need new leadership and a real plan to turn things around, and I'm ready to get the D.A.'s Office back to focusing on Public Safety."

Battisti also submitted designating petitions to appear on the Conservative Party line. Broome County Conservative Party Chairman Aaron Martin appeared as the contact person on Battisti's designating petitions for those lines. Korchak only submitted petitions for the Republican Party nomination.

Korchak, who frames himself as a foil to the Republican establishment, wrote in a statement to WSKG that he'd asked the Conservative Party's executive committee to hold a primary for its ballot line.

"I met with the Broome County Conservative Party Committee and requested that a primary be held to allow all the conservative voters to choose their

candidate,” Korchak wrote in a statement to WSKG. “Unfortunately, the six people on the committee denied my request. They believed that the party was better served by not endorsing the incumbent DA who for 25 years has fought for justice for victims of crime and endorsed a criminal defense attorney who has never prosecuted a single case and has a history of tax liens, judgments, failed businesses and current financial problems. They must believe he represents their ideals.”



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Incumbent Broome County District Attorney Michael Korchak is facing a Republican primary by Paul Battisti.

Martin, speaking to WSKG in an interview Thursday, indicated a number of factors played into the executive committee's decision to make an endorsement into the race instead of letting it go to a primary.

"The executive committee members were weighing all the factors that go into it," Martin said. "Certainly there's a history of the candidates and what they stand for, if they align themselves with parties that don't share the values of

the Conservative Party. That might be an issue for some of them. I don't want to speak for them, but it certainly could be a factor. But I think that the committee made the decision based on the whole, the whole factors that they're weighing. So I don't want to say that there's one particular issue that led an individual to vote a certain way or to make a certain determination. But certainly, all that plays into the various decisions that they make."

Martin said he recused himself due to his employment with the county and relationships with both Korchak and Battisti.

Last month, Korchak told reporters that he was focused on winning the Republican primary, but wouldn't rule out seeking other ballot lines, including an independent nomination. To do so, Korchak would need to secure 1,500 signatures from registered Broome County voters to appear on the ballot under an independent line.

Korchak also requested a meeting with the Broome County Democratic Committee earlier this year, though party leaders shut down his request for a cross endorsement. This was partially due to the entry of former Binghamton Mayor Matt Ryan to the race for district attorney on the Democratic line around the same time.

Some rank-and-file Conservative Party members objected to the decision to endorse early. Broome County Legislator Stephen Flagg said he supports Korchak and believes party leaders shouldn't try to influence elections.

"I'm a purist," Flagg told WSKG. "I just don't like thumbs on the scale for any primaries. Let the process play out and the best candidate gets everybody's support. It doesn't always seem to work that way."

Flagg added that he believes Korchak should seek an independent ballot line.