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# GOP hopefuls for George Latimer seat include Dan Schorr, Sarmad Khojasteh

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ALBANY - A former district attorney candidate and a lawyer from Bedford are among the potential Republican hopefuls for George Latimer's soon-to-be-vacant state Senate seat.

Sarmad Khojasteh, a commercial-litigation attorney, confirmed Tuesday he is actively seeking the GOP's nod for the seat, which will likely be filled by a special election early next year.

He joins Dan Schorr, a former prosecutor who challenged then-Westchester District Attorney Janet DiFiore in 2009, as Republicans under consideration for the party's ballot line.

"As an immigrant whose family benefited from the refuge and opportunity the United States offers, I've always felt compelled to serve," Khojasteh said in an interview Tuesday.

"While the current state of our political discourse understandably has driven some of our best Americans away from public service and political engagement, for me it's only raised the stakes."

Latimer will vacate his Senate seat at the end of the year before becoming Westchester County executive in January.

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**[Mike Spano may run for Latimer's seat](http://story/news/politics/politics-on-the-hudson/2017/11/13/yonkers-mayor-mike-spano-may-run-george-latimers-senate-seat/107651722/)** ([/story/news/politics/politics-on-the-hudson/2017/11/13/yonkers-mayor-mike-spano-may-run-george-latimers-senate-seat/107651722/](http://story/news/politics/politics-on-the-hudson/2017/11/13/yonkers-mayor-mike-spano-may-run-george-latimers-senate-seat/107651722/))

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**[Latimer wins Westchester County executive race](http://story/news/politics/elections/2017/11/08/latimer-wins-westchester-executive/836607001/)** ([/story/news/politics/elections/2017/11/08/latimer-wins-westchester-executive/836607001/](http://story/news/politics/elections/2017/11/08/latimer-wins-westchester-executive/836607001/))

It will be up to Gov. Andrew Cuomo whether to call a special election to fill the remainder of Latimer's term, which runs through 2018. Either way, a full two-year term will be up for election in November 2018.

The vacancy will set up a pitched battle between Democrats and Republicans for the district, which is entirely within Westchester County and includes the Sound Shore and part of Yonkers. The 63-seat Senate has a razor-thin party divide, with 31 elected Republicans and 30 elected Democrats come January.



**Dan Schorr** (Photo: Mark Vergari/The Journal News)

Khojasteh and Schorr have both had conversations about the seat with Westchester Republican leaders, who will ultimately select the party's candidate for a special election.

Westchester County GOP Chair Doug Colety said Tuesday he is just beginning the process of selecting a candidate and has other candidates to meet. He said it was too soon to say who he has discussed the seat with.

"I need to open up this process and find the best candidate," he said in a text message.

[At least three Democrats \(/story/news/politics/politics-on-the-hudson/2017/11/13/yonkers-mayor-mike-spano-may-run-george-latimers-senate-seat/107651722/\)](#), meanwhile, have publicly expressed interest in the seat: Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano, [Assemblywoman Shelley Mayer \(/story/news/politics/politics-on-the-hudson/2017/11/09/shelley-mayer-kat-brezler-eye-run-george-latimers-senate-seat/107498926/\)](#) and Kat Brezler, a schoolteacher and founder of a pro-Bernie Sanders group.

Schorr, who declined comment Tuesday, is well known within Westchester Republican circles, having carried the party's line in the 2009 district attorney race. He's a former criminal prosecutor in Westchester and New York City and was once the Yonkers inspector general.

He now works for Kroll, a corporate investigations and cybersecurity firm.

Khojasteh is a political newcomer. An attorney with Kasowitz Benson Torres LLP, he specializes in commercial litigation and once represented the Obama administration's Federal Housing Finance Agency.

Last year, he was part of a legal team representing then-candidate Donald Trump in a successful effort to keep Trump's divorce proceedings sealed after Gannett Co. Inc. and The New York Times sued to try and make them public. Gannett is The Journal News' parent company.

Khojasteh was born in Iran before his family immigrated to the United States in 1983 following the Islamic Revolution, he said. He grew up in Poughkeepsie and now lives in Bedford.

In the interview, Khojasteh said many state and federal lawmakers have taken to passing legislation to "win points in a game of partisan ping pong" rather than solving their constituents' problems.

"The result is unsustainable for all of us but particularly so for lower and middle-income New Yorkers, many of whom are immigrants facing circumstances no different than those my parents faced 35 years ago," he said.

Cuomo's office, meanwhile, has said it is considering its options when it comes to setting a special election.

The governor can't officially call a special election until Latimer vacates the seat, which will come at year's end.

"Action on a vacancy cannot be taken until there officially is one," Cuomo spokesman Rich Azzopardi said. "In the meantime, we will continue to monitor the situation."

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