

Chris Palombi Announces Campaign to Unseat Steny Hoyer

Posted by [Zach Hill](#) On 01/13/2020



CALVERT COUNTY, Md. — Former Police Officer.

Web Programmer.

Former Teacher.

Ice Hockey Coach.

Husband.

Father.

And now a candidate for Maryland's 5th Congressional District, looking to take the position of a 20-term incumbent and the U.S. House Majority Leader.

Chris Palombi, 35 of Saint Leonard, is new to the field of politics but has big plans to bring down Steny Hoyer [D], who has been serving in Congress longer than Palombi has been alive. Hoping to win the Republican ticket after the Apr. 28 primary election, Palombi sat down with TheBaynet.com to discuss his intentions of running a campaign built on bipartisan cooperation, fiscal accountability, minimized government regulation and maintaining the rights and freedom that accompany being an American.

His Upbringing

Born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and moving to Southern Maryland at just three-year-old, Palombi talked about some of his experiences growing up in Southern Maryland.

On a 47-acre family farm in Calvert County, Palombi says that he has been no stranger to working hard from a young age, as he touched on how critical having his immediate and extended family supporting him through life was. His late grandfather, Robert Sickle Sr., was a figure Palombi noted as playing a tremendous role in his upbringing.

Prior to catching the morning bus in elementary school, Palombi often would walk to his grandfather's house and join him for morning coffee; the pair would sit around and talk about "news, politics, life-lessons, and sports... especially about how Bobby Cox was the best coach in baseball."

As Palombi described his grandfather's inclination to fix broken things in his life or the lives of those around him, in hopes of achieving a better understanding, is a tendency Palombi said he finds himself often replicating. When Palombi entered his teen years, home computers and the internet began interfacing into everyday homes, and his grandfather shared the same intrigue as he did in learning the ins-and-outs of the technology.

"I got a phone call one day from my grandfather, and he was asking for help in installing more RAM on his computer," Palombi said. "When I got there, I saw my grandfather with his computer completely taken apart... After reassembling it, we had learned quite a bit about every component and it just made me want to continue [learning more about computers]."

Palombi realized later on that it was the lessons learned from his grandfather, such as "tackling issues in a flexible manner, being well-rounded and having a desire for personal development and self-learning," that would help guide him to a better life.

Following his graduation from Patuxent High School, Palombi went on to Michigan State University where he would earn his degree in Criminal Justice, after also walking-on to one of the most competitive college ice hockey programs in the country.

His Time on Capitol Hill



With his degree and an expansive training from the police academy, Palombi would go on to spend five years working around Capitol Hill as a United States Capitol Police Officer. In his time there, he says one of his prouder accomplishments was a proposal he offered which alleviated the amount of overtime issued, ultimately saving the department and taxpayers' money.

Palombi also recalled one of the most formative moments that led him to take an interest in politics; during his first month as an officer in August of 2007, Palombi found himself witnessing firsthand what he described as a "dysfunctional Congress" from inside the House and Senate chambers. Following the collapse of the I-35W Mississippi River Bridge in Minnesota, which left 13 dead and over 140 injured, Congress held session to discuss getting funding to help rebuild their infrastructure.

"The Senate had just gone to recess and my training officer and I walked over to the House side, and everyone on the floor was debating on how to get this bill passed to help Minnesota," Palombi said. "They're about to vote and for the first time the electronic voting system display went down..."

The Republican representative approaches and requests votes to be recorded manually by roll call or by teller. Then, Steny Hoyer stands up on behalf of Democrats, and says 'We need to take the system down for a period of time in order to fix it... [the technician] needs approximately 30 minutes with no votes.'

But Palombi described coming back to the House floor later in the hour, just to see the two parties still fighting over the same problem with no progress made.

"That whole experience really threw me for a loop when I saw our leadership, or lack of leadership, when it comes to getting things done and doing what is right," Palombi explained. "It's the pettiness and pride that I saw in that moment and all throughout my time detailing Capitol Hill that helped inspire me to want to be the change."

While working for the U.S. Capitol Police, Palombi took a position coaching ice hockey at St. Mary's Ryken High School, where one year later he would be named head coach. However, it is his leadership throughout the state's ice hockey community that has gone unmatched to this day.

Palombi was first asked to be the Southern Conference Commissioner of the Maryland Student Hockey League (MSHL) in 2011. After attending meetings within the league and listening to some of their issues, Palombi took it upon himself to "be the change" by writing proposals to league rules and policies. After presenting a 16-page proposal to the league on how to resolve their league playoff system, Palombi was eventually nominated and voted on by fellow coaches to serve as league Vice President, and again later to serve as league President.

His Shift to Technology

What started out as a hobby for Palombi eventually turned into multiple career opportunities throughout his lifetime. While working for U.S. Capitol Police, Palombi became an entirely self-taught web developer, making websites on the side for local companies.

After expansively building his portfolio, he was offered a position as a Senior Consultant for the I.T. consulting firm, Booz Allen Hamilton. And just under two years later, Palombi received a call from St. Mary's Ryken High School in Leonardtown, Maryland, already knowing him from his involvement with the ice hockey team, asking if he would be interested in taking over as the school's Webmaster— which currently serves as his full-time job.

Being that he has spent a great deal of his life working with technology, one of his strongest stances surrounds the amount of accountability that he feels should be placed on large tech companies, and addressing how users are getting shortchanged.

"While I'm not a fan of government regulation, bulk data collection has become a commodity and the consumers are being exploited." Palombi said. "We need to hold these companies accountable for transparency on the information they record and profit off of consumers. Purchasing a device should not force you to forfeit your freedoms."

Aside from protections for users just enjoying use of online platforms, Palombi says that he feels consumer data rights are being stolen from everyone— and he wants to put a stop to it.

"Big technology companies are involved with massive amounts of bulk data collection, and have been leveraging smart devices and apps to track, collect, and sell large amounts of our data to third party companies without us knowing," Palombi explained.

"What data and information is being collected and sold by our own devices and apps? Who 'owns' that data? Then add the other concerns of data breaches, spying, manipulated search and ads based on AI; it makes the consumer vulnerable. To them, I feel that we're more of a consumer than a user on this open-platform that they claim to offer," Palombi said.

His Stance on Fiscal Responsibility

A common issue that Republicans often go to bat for is lowering taxes, fiscal responsibility and fiscal accountability— and Palombi is no exception. Two fiscal issues that Palombi would like to see addressed with a sense of urgency are further tax reforms and tackling the national debt.

"What bothers me is how much Congress has been kicking the can down the road when it comes controlling the national debt and maintaining tax-payers money," Palombi explained. "Our national debt is over \$23 trillion dollars, and yet they continually pass bills stuffed with earmarks for special projects. Ultimately, this is not government play money. This is taxpayers' money."

On top of being a part of a newer and younger generation that will likely need to address the looming national debt, Palombi has offered up some new ways he would like to further analyze implementing change to the current tax systems. He says he would love to explore more non-traditional ways to simplify the tax code in order to give power back to constituents.

"The economy is doing very well... Unemployment is at over a 60-year low and some business sectors are having a hard time finding employees because everyone is working," Palombi said. "A lot of that has to do with the tax cuts, and allowing people and companies to use more of their money how they want. While the debt is large, and has to be balanced and lowered, we also cannot afford to raise any taxes."

Additionally, Palombi says he would also like to address disproportionate college costs and what he believes is a case of higher-education taking advantage of the system.

"College costs have been insanely inflated... [considering] how much it costs for students going to college now compared to when I went around 15 years ago," Palombi said. "I think one of the factors that contributes to the issue is federal financial aid. Colleges have exploited that and use it to their benefit, to continue raising costs and that's something that needs to be looked into... As far as my stance on college debt forgiveness, with \$23 trillion in debt, especially when the plan comes at the expense of the federal government... We must ask 'Is it affordable right now?'"

His Stance on Censorship and The First Amendment

One issue that Palombi says has been impacting citizens, especially in the age of the technology, is censorship and oppression of the First Amendment.

"Unfortunately, we are seeing some political factions today that are increasingly displaying their willful disregard to civil discourse and free speech," Palombi said. "Some has led to demands of censorship, whether it's at a college campus or social networks, to acts of physical violence... all due to their difference of opinions."

Palombi, much like a number of conservative personalities, finds growing censorship problems to be alarming— and would like to see them addressed on a bigger scale for the sake of democracy.

"Censorship is never the answer," Palombi explained. "Regardless of if you agree or not with certain individuals or ideas, we should always be free to open discourse to challenge ideas. We are too diverse as human beings to all have the same perspectives and life experiences. We must embrace our differences and have the willingness to listen, learn and grow from the diversity of thought."

His Goals

Many people would likely consider Palombi to be one of the farthest things away from a traditional politician. He radiates a clear concern for the current political landscape and has decided that rather than complain— he wants to make the changes.

"I like talking politics and having discussions. I'm not willing to put the other person down because they have different views," Palombi said. "I actually enjoy engaging discussions with people that have different opinions. It's an opportunity to learn and grow. We all have different perspectives."

Even if he wins the primary bid, Palombi will face an extremely uphill battle challenging a political titan who has received no less than 64% of the vote in Maryland's 5th Congressional District since 2002. Though Hoyer will also be facing some challenging bids from more progressive democratic candidates in his own primaries, this will likely be the final election before the state and country sees some major redistricting reform as a result of the upcoming census.

"I think that my willingness to listen and seek compromise rather than wasting time being negative are a couple of the different qualities that I bring— which will hopefully gain some votes in areas that traditionally do not go the way of anybody with an 'R' next to their name," Palombi said. "While there are some programs that are good for us, we're much more empowered than we think we are... having these conversations, having these dialogues about maintaining our freedoms and maintaining our rights and our liberties... I honestly think that that's a winning message regardless."

"With politics now, I often struggle when I see how little is really getting done in Washington," Palombi explained. "It's become too polarizing, to a point where I fear nothing good is coming out of it. But when you talk to your neighbors and your friends— you find out that we're not that different at all."

To view his entire platform or to contact his campaign, visit www.chrispalombi.com

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