

# [***A former Naval officer will challenge Florida Congressman Matt Gaetz in upcoming GOP primary***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BXG-0FC1-JC5B-G4MM-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

[*U.S. Rep. Matt Gaetz*](https://apnews.com/hub/matt-gaetz), who angered many of his Republican House colleagues with his challenges that led to [*former Speaker Kevin McCarthy's ouster*](https://apnews.com/article/kevin-mccarthy-matt-gaetz-speaker-vacate-congress-e7e5ccc6cf79ccbf5b4a7b73b9d5a3ae), has drawn a former U.S. Navy pilot as an opponent in August's GOP primary.

Former Capt. Aaron Dimmock, who now is a business consultant, filed paperwork last week to challenge Gaetz in the heavily Republican district that encompasses the western Florida Panhandle. It is home to Pensacola Naval Air Station and more than 93,000 veterans live in the area.

Dimmock's campaign treasurer previously worked for American Patriots PAC, the committee McCarthy used to support his preferred candidates in the 2022 election. Dimmock’s campaign does not have a website, it has not issued a statement and did not respond to emails Tuesday seeking comment. Public records show he recently lived in Missouri.

According to Dimmock's LinkedIn page, he teaches business executives how to lead with candor, which he describes as “the ability to give feedback in a way that shows people you care about them personally and are willing to challenge them directly.”

Gaetz, in a posting to the social media platform X, said, “I knew former Representative McCarthy would be getting a puppet of his to run.” He then called Dimmock “a Woke Toby Flenderson,” referencing the hapless and often bullied human resources director on the TV show "The Office.” Gaetz easily turned back a similar challenge by a former FedEx executive in 2022, getting 70% of the vote in the GOP primary.

Gaetz, a favorite of former President Donald Trump, was the ringleader of the small Republican group that blocked McCarthy's election to the speakership for 15 heated rounds in January 2023 before ceding. Nine months later, Gaetz filed the motion that allowed him and seven other Republicans to oust McCarthy over the strenuous objections of the vast majority of their GOP colleagues. McCarthy resigned from Congress on Dec. 31.

Gaetz, 41, is the subject of an ongoing House ethics investigation into whether he had sex with an underage girl, something he has denied. [*The Justice Department did not bring charges following an investigation into his conduct.*](https://apnews.com/article/politics-united-states-government-matt-gaetz-donald-trump-florida-6398693b203e38dbdabefb23d8377ac1)

Gaetz said he challenged McCarthy because he was too accommodating to Democrats and didn't cut spending, but his Republican critics say he is a chaos agent who was angered by the ethics probe.

According to newspaper records, Dimmock, 50, graduated from a private high school in Indianapolis, where he quarterbacked the football team and played basketball. He then attended the U.S. Naval Academy, where he majored in ocean engineering. He graduated in 1996.

Dimmock then piloted a P-3 surveillance plane for about five years before becoming a flight instructor. His LinkedIn page says he then moved into administration, eventually overseeing Navy recruiting in the Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina region. He lists a master's degree from Georgetown University and a doctorate from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Gaetz is the son of Don Gaetz, a prominent Panhandle politician who served as president of the Florida Senate from 2012 to 2014. He graduated from Florida State University in 2003 and William & Mary Law School in 2007. He was admitted to the Florida Bar the following year.

Gaetz quickly entered ***politics***, winning a special election in 2010 to fill a vacant Florida House seat. He was elected to the U.S. House in 2016 and has easily won reelection three times. His campaign has raised $4.5 million over the last two years and has $2 million in reserves, federal election records show. Dimmock, since he just entered the race, has not filed any financial records.

The winner will face Democrat Gay Valimont, a former Florida leader in the Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. She has raised $280,000.

**Load-Date:** April 30, 2024

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