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## Pennsylvania House Republicans Unhappy Special Election to Replace Accused Harasser Zabel Is Delayed

March 10, 2023 Bradley Vasoli



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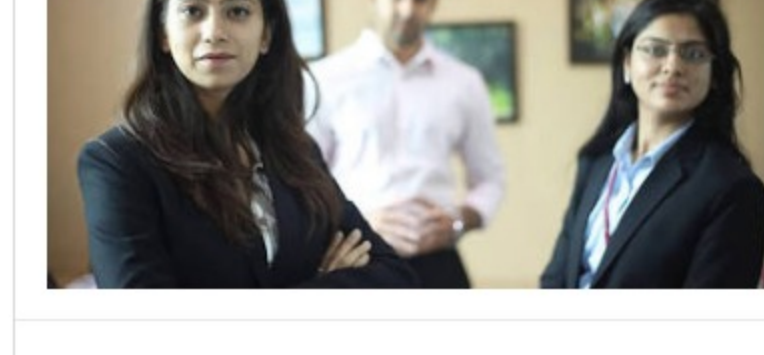
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Some Pennsylvania state House Republicans are unhappy with the timetable their legislative rivals have set forth to replace State Representative Mike Zabel (D-Drexel Hill) who is resigning in light of sexual harassment allegations.

State Representative Craig Williams (R-Chadds Ford) [tweeted](#) his reaction to these events, criticizing the Democrats for asserting they have majority control of the House of Representatives, even though their number would tie that of Republicans at 101. He furthermore blasted them for failing to schedule a special election for the May 16 primary, something that could happen if Zabel made his resignation effective before March 16. A special election will instead take place this fall.

"Why wait until March 16 to resign?" Williams asked. "Because unless [House Speaker Joanna McClinton (D-Philadelphia)] issues the special election writ that day, they miss the deadline for the May election. Cowardly thwarting an election likely to Nov."



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Zabel's fellow Delaware County-based lawmaker inquired in his tweet storm whether there would be criminal charges over the allegation that the Democrat touched Service Employees International Union lobbyist Andi Perez's knee without her consent. He cited [recent findings](#) from the Pennsylvania Supreme Court that similar nonconsensual contact constitutes indecent assault.

Earlier this month, the disgraced Democrat wrote [a letter](#) to his chamber's party leaders resigning his position on the Judiciary Committee but refusing to step back further from his legislative duties. Therein, Zabel obliquely suggested he has a drinking problem and pledged to get help to overcome it but he did not directly acknowledge responsibility for any sexual misconduct.

The outgoing lawmaker first faced accusations from Perez, who said the representative made sexual advances toward her and would not stop when asked to do so. [Other revelations](#) regarding women who say they have seen Zabel (pictured above) engage in similar behavior or have experienced such treatment from him themselves have come out since he initially refused to step down. On Wednesday, he informed McClinton he would leave office.

Perez voiced relief that her alleged harasser would not remain in office much longer.

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"I hope that all the women who so bravely shared their stories can find comfort in knowing that Mike Zabel is no longer in office," she said in [a statement](#). "I know I do. Thank you to everyone who showed support for me and these women throughout this process. No one who sexually harasses people should get to keep their job, and Mike Zabel is no different."

The union lobbyist also said she is glad that the State House adopted new rules allowing anyone who engages with representatives in an official capacity to submit allegations of sexual misconduct to chamber leadership.

Republicans could find winning Zabel's seat difficult this autumn. Republicans [held](#) the 163rd legislative district ever since the late Nick Micozzie first won it in 1978. Micozzie retired in 2014, after which fellow Republican Jamie Santora had it for four years. But sweeping Democratic victories across the Philadelphia suburbs in 2018 brought in a new class of legislators that included Zabel, who [won](#) his most recent election against Republican Kenneth Rucci last year with over 64 percent of the vote.

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Bradley Vasoli is managing editor of *The Pennsylvania Daily Star*. Follow Brad on Twitter at [@BVasoli](#). Email tips to [bradvasoliwriter@gmail.com](#).

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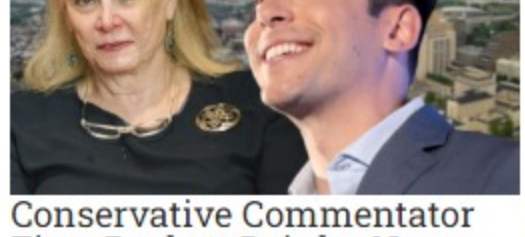
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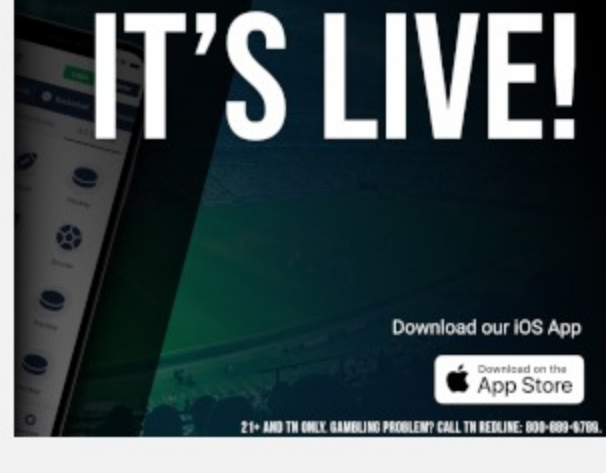
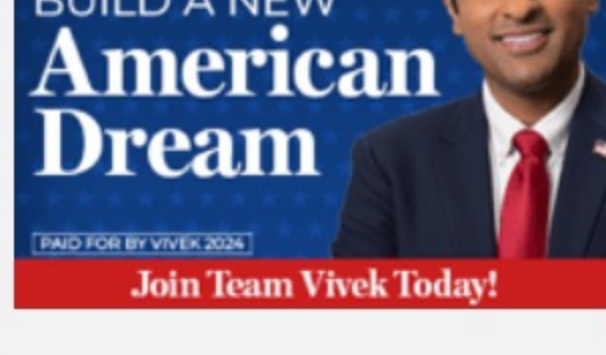
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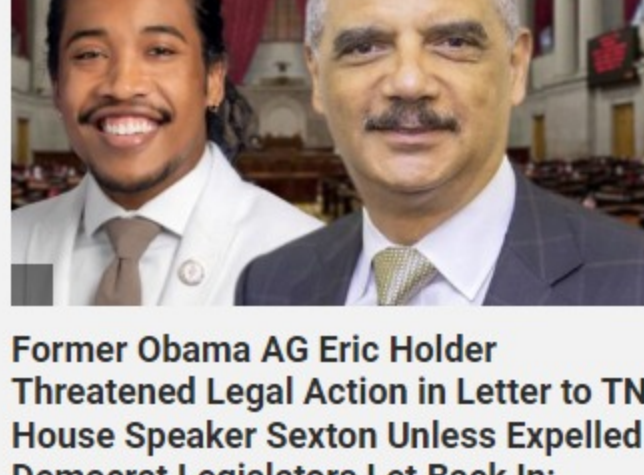
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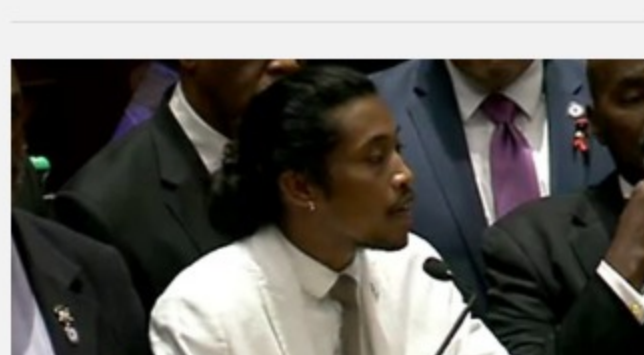
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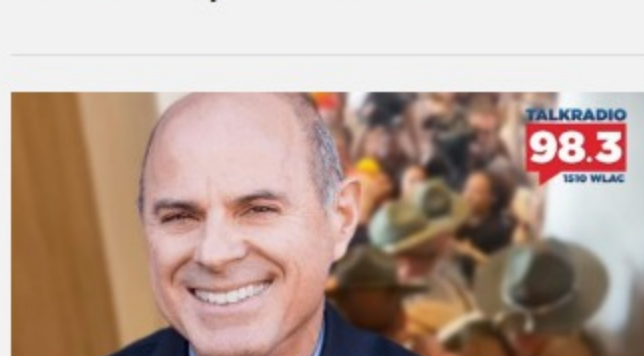
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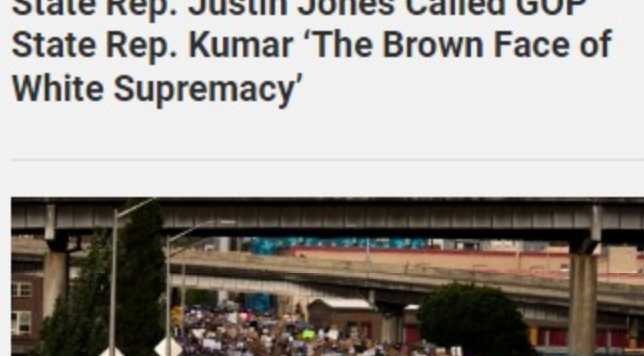
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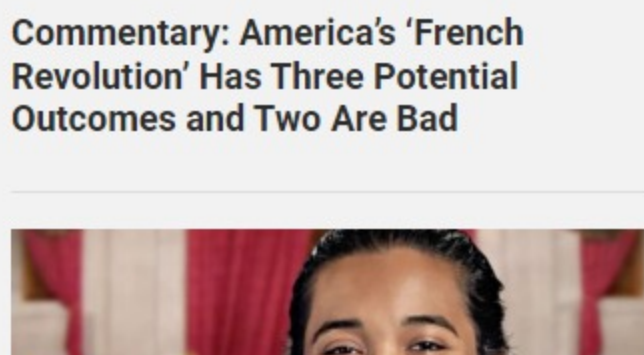
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