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ELECTIONS

Nancy Pelosi faces primary challenge from former AOC aide

Saikat Chakrabarti, a former tech worker, is calling for generational change in Democratic Party.



Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (right) and her then-chief of staff Saikat Chakrabarti walk together on Capitol Hill on Nov. 14, 2018. | Pablo Martinez Monsivais/AP

By ALI BIANCO
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Another chapter in a generational battle over the future of the Democratic Party appears to be taking shape in San Francisco in a fight for the seat now held by former House speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Saikat Chakrabarti, a former chief of staff for Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, announced Wednesday that he would challenge Pelosi in the primary, citing the former speaker's efforts to prevent the progressive New York congressman from becoming the top Democrat on the House Oversight Committee.

“I respect what Nancy Pelosi has accomplished in her career, but we are living in a totally different America than the one she knew when she entered politics 45 years ago,” Chakrabarti, a 39-year-old former tech worker, [said in a social media post](#). “America is stuck, and Americans want real solutions that are as big as the problems we face.”

Pelosi, who stepped down as speaker in 2022 after nearly 20 years in the position, easily won reelection to her deep blue San Francisco seat last year. Her office declined to comment on Chakrabarti’s announcement.

She has filed paperwork to run for reelection in 2026 but has not said publicly whether she will see another term. State Sen. Scott Wiener [has long been expected](#) to run for the seat if Pelosi were to step down. Local political figures have also speculated that the former speaker’s daughter, Christine, might run for her seat if her mother were to retire.

Whoever wins the primary is likely to win the general election and hold the seat for a long time in a city that remains a Democratic stronghold.

Pelosi and the 35-year-old Ocasio-Cortez have at times had [a strained relationship](#). In December, she opposed the New York progressive’s bid to lead the Oversight Committee over 74-year-old Rep. Gerry Connolly of Virginia, who won the race for the position.

Chakrabarti, who previously worked for Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, criticized Pelosi’s support of Connolly as he called for change in the party. “Watching Trump and Elon freely unleash chaos in their illegal seizure of government, it’s become clear to me that the Democratic Party needs new leadership,” he said.

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