

In Nassau, Campaign Uses 9/11 In TV Ad

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Body

The father of a World Trade Center victim who has made tighter immigration controls a personal quest will appear in a televised political advertisement this week, endorsing a Nassau County Republican candidate for Congress.

Political analysts and officials of both parties said they believed this was the first time a family member of a Sept. 11 victim has been used so directly in a partisan campaign.

The ad is an endorsement for Marilyn O'Grady, a Garden City ophthalmologist who is running against the three-term incumbent, Representative Carolyn McCarthy of the Fourth District.

In the ad, Peter Gadiel, whose son James died in the attack on the trade center, criticizes Mrs. McCarthy's record on immigration issues, calling her "part of the problem" for opposing limits on immigration and suggesting that her stance has undercut national security.

"Marilyn O'Grady understands we need to defend ourselves," Mr. Gadiel says.

County and national Republican officials refused to comment on the ad, referring all questions to Dr. O'Grady, and said their national strategy had been not to link terrorism and immigration policy in the current campaign.

Mrs. McCarthy, who is running as a Democrat but remains enrolled as a Republican, called the ad exploitative.

"I denounce her denigrating immigrants who have come to this country," she said in a statement. "And most of all, I denounce her using this family's tragedy and the loss of their son for her sordid political purposes."

Dr. O'Grady's campaign manager, Mary Schmidt Roth, said the television spot evolved from an unsolicited offer of support from Mr. Gadiel, whose views coincided on many points with the candidate's. The ad, she said, will be broadcast on cable and network stations beginning today.

Mr. Gadiel, reached by telephone, said he had not yet volunteered to appear in ads for candidates other than Dr. O'Grady, although he has spoken at events sponsored by anti-immigration groups.

He described himself as a lifelong Republican, but said he was motivated only by the conviction that the terror attacks would not have happened if the government had controlled illegal immigration.

"I am not looking to make any money or advance any political career of my own," said Mr. Gadiel, who lives in Connecticut. "I am not looking to exploit my son's death in any way. If I could turn the clock and have my son back, I wouldn't be doing this."

He is not the first grieving relative of a crime victim to ally himself with politicians, especially those who seek to paint an opponent as soft on crime. In some cases, the grieving relatives themselves have become politicians.

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Mrs. McCarthy, for instance, plunged into public life after a gunman killed her husband and seriously wounded her son during a rampage on a Long Island Rail Road train in 1993. Advocating gun control, she first appeared in **campaign** commercials endorsing Gov. Mario M. Cuomo. In 1996, she decided to run for Congress and won.

Anti-immigration groups have tried to stoke public fear that foreign terrorists exploit the American immigration system, but immigration has been a nonissue in most Congressional races this season, as both parties try to appeal to Hispanic and immigrant voters. As for the presumed Sept. 11 hijackers, they had entered the country legally, although at least two had violated the terms of their visas by the time of the attacks.

"People are getting pounded by one story after another about how alien malefactors are coming into the country," said Dan Stein, executive director of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, or FAIR, which has featured Mr. Gadiel at many of its public meetings. "It's kind of surreal that we don't see more candidates doing what O'Grady is doing."

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