



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on May 29, 2022

PAC to Spend \$1 Million to Support Tlaib's Primary Challenger

As intra-party civil war has come knocking on Democrats' door, no incumbent appears to be safe.

A PAC endorsed by prominent South Carolina Democrat Bakari Sellers has publicly [committed to spending](#) \$1 million or more to support a candidate who is attempting to defeat Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.) in the primary.

Sellers, a CNN analyst, is known for having served in the South Carolina House of Representatives from 2006 to 2014, vacating his seat in order to run for lieutenant governor, a bid that he lost.



AP Images
Rep. Rashida Tlaib

The group with which he is associated, Urban Empowerment Action PAC, has a mission of supporting candidates who are “dedicated to the educational empowerment and economic uplift of Black communities,” according to a release shared with *Politico's* “The Recast.”

The PAC states that it is supporting Detroit's city clerk, Janice Winfrey, against Tlaib with the aim of boosting “her campaign to restore infrastructure, improve educational opportunities in the district and support the Biden-Harris agenda in D.C.”

Urban Empowerment Action PAC (UEA) is a coalition of black and Jewish business leaders that has its sights set on removing Tlaib, who has been vocal about her disdain for Israel and its treatment of Palestinians.

As one of the most left-leaning members of the House Democratic Caucus, Tlaib has not hesitated to speak out against Joe Biden. She delivered her own rebuttal to his State of the Union address in March, and was a “no” vote on his infrastructure bill that was signed into law late last year.

The two-term Tlaib said she voted against the bill because the party's leadership did not make good on a promise to pass the legislation alongside the Build Back Better bill, which would have expanded climate and social spending. For Tlaib, separating the two causes progressives to lose their leverage, and Build Back Better notably remains stalled in Congress.

Sellers is engaging in fundraising for UEA, saying he wants to see an increase of the Congressional Black Caucus in the next Congress.

Speaking of the Tlaib race, Sellers told “The Recast”: “We are hoping that we can have a candidate that doesn't have varying distractions.”

While Tlaib is Palestinian-American, Winfrey is black.

Denzel McCampbell, a spokesperson for Tlaib's reelection campaign, reacted to UEA's endorsement of Winfrey by saying his boss is “battle tested” and calling on Winfrey to disavow the PAC's spending.



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“Outside Super PAC ads do not win elections, direct voter contact does. If our opponent truly does care about our democracy, I hope that she will immediately disavow and condemn this type of Big Money attack on our democracy that only seeks to mislead voters and distort reality,” McCampbell told “The Recast.”

UEA’s endorsement speaks to fears among the black wing of the Democratic Party that Detroit, the biggest majority-black city in America, will not have a single black representative in the next Congress with the retirement of Rep. Brenda Lawrence.

The PAC spent \$55,000 supporting freshman Rep. Nikema Williams (D-Ga.) in her primary, which she won last week. Williams is the only incumbent on UEA PAC’s initial list of candidates it’s backing. Three others are seeking open seats in Illinois, Florida, and California.

Notably, however, Tlaib is the only incumbent who is being challenged on the PAC’s initial list of candidates.

Politico notes:

The support could go a long way for Winfrey, who will face off against Tlaib in Michigan’s Aug. 2 primary. They’ll be competing in the redrawn 12th District, which includes parts of Detroit, as well as the more conservative areas of Livonia and the city of Dearborn, which is home to the nation’s largest population of Arab Americans.

Winfrey, who entered the race in February, raised a little more than \$236,000 and had just over \$220,000 cash on hand, according to latest federal election commission records. Those figures are dwarfed by Tlaib’s war chest. She raised more than \$2.3 million and still has \$1.6 million cash on hand.

Rep. Kurt Schrader, a seven-term centrist Democrat from Oregon, recently [lost his primary](#) to a progressive challenger — giving the progressive side of the Democratic Party another win.

Schrader’s challenger, attorney and business owner Jamie McLeod-Skinner, has the endorsement of Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass).

Yet in Wisconsin, Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes, a Democrat endorsed by Warren, appears to be losing ground in the primary to Milwaukee Bucks executive Alex Lasry, who is more moderate and has the support of the state’s labor unions.



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