



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on August 15, 2013

Uphill Battle for Republican Challenger in New Jersey Senate Race

With substantial wins over their opponents in Tuesday's primary, the victorious Republican and Democrat candidates will face each other in a special October 16 election to fill the seat held by New Jersey Senator Frank Lautenberg, who died in June. Polls show that the Democrat, Cory Booker, [should win in a walk](#). But to hear Republican candidate Steve Lonegan (shown) tell about it, the race could be close. [Lonegan is taking no prisoners](#).



In his victory speech, Lonegan called Booker the candidate “anointed by Hollywood” in direct reference to funding that Booker [is receiving from Hollywood types](#) including Oprah Winfrey and “Desperate Housewives” star Eva Longoria. Booker is, according to Lonegan, the top choice of “Silicon Valley moguls” like Mark Zuckerberg who just promised to give \$100 million to set up a foundation to help Newark’s public schools. Lonegan said that they want to make him “California’s third U.S. senator.”

Lonegan has a lot of baggage going into the sprint: He built a modest record as a tax-cutter while mayor of Bogota, New Jersey, a town of just 8,000, during his 12 years there. He ran for Congress in 1998 but came up short, and ran for governor in 2005 and then again in 2009, falling short both times then as well. He’s had his share of controversies, including asking an outdoor advertising company to remove a McDonald’s ad in Spanish from a local billboard. He was arrested while protesting at a town hall meeting scheduled by Governor Jon Corzine in 2008. He dissembled when he failed to disclose fully his compensation in his campaign filings that he received from Americans for Prosperity while serving as state director.

None of this appeared to matter as Lonegan opened with his broadside against Booker:

[My campaign is] absolutely going to be different. This is going to be the clearest line-in-the-sand election between a conservative and left-wing liberal the state has ever seen.

He added:

It’s going to look like a conservative versus a far-left liberal who’s going to paint a picture of a utopia where government can meet all of our needs.

I think government [is] the problem.

Lonegan got a running start in his campaign against Booker. In mid-July he kicked off an “Expose Cory Booker” tour in front of a school that had been closed, using it as a backdrop to criticize Booker for breaking his promises on public education. From there he went to a horrific crime scene using that as evidence that Booker has failed to reign in crime while Newark’s mayor. [He reiterated those charges](#) in his victory speech:

With unemployment up from 7.5 to 14.5 percent — the highest of any city in the state — since he became mayor, taxes up 47 percent since he took office, and violent crimes, murders and robberies



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all increasing in the last three years, you'll hear a lot from me about Booker's failed performance.

He's turning Newark into another Detroit.

Former Democratic Senator Robert Torricelli [warned](#) that Lonegan could do some substantial damage to Booker during the short campaign even if he loses:

The good news about being opposed by Lonegan is that he's ideologically unacceptable to most New Jersey voters. The bad news is that [Lonegan is] prone to say or do anything, and it can cause lasting damage....

If I were Cory Booker I'd be less concerned about Lonegan defeating me than I would about doing damage to my ... reputation.

All Lonegan needs to do is pick up the August 6 issue of the *New York Times* to obtain [all the ammunition he'd need to do just that](#). The three contributing writers of a long and detailed article about how Booker is being funded through a phony Internet start-up company — Waywire — goes into excruciating detail. All the top names are involved: Sean Parker, the founder of Napster and the first president of Facebook, Gina Bianchini, co-founder of Ning, Eric Schmidt, chairman of Google, Jeff Weiner, CEO of LinkedIn, Reid Hoffman, a co-founder of LinkedIn, and John Ham, co-founder of Ustream.

When Booker was approached to front the startup because of his name recognition, he was given a larger share of the company than either of the two directors running the company. Booker said it was easy to raise the \$1.75 million from his friends "because of the power of the idea." As the *Times* pointed out:

The bonds between Mr. Booker and the tech industry are likely to be fruitful. The industry, which is seeking to expand its influence in Washington, can use more friends in Congress.

And Mr. Booker, who is viewed within the Democratic Party as a future national contender, can benefit from the fund-raising muscle and new media platform that Silicon Valley provides.

In case the point made by the *Times* isn't clear – that Silicon Valley wants a "voice in Washington" and is willing to bet that Booker can provide it once he is New Jersey's newest senator — Stuart Stevens, [writing at the Daily Beast](#), should help:

The Internet startup, called Waywire, is basically a joke, with fewer than 3,000 visits in June. Starting a company that doesn't really do anything so that "investors," most of whom are donors, can make a New Jersey politician rich seems more like a story line of a Sopranos episode....

There is an irreconcilable difference between the guy who cares so much [Booker] that he lives in public housing and the guy who uses his connections to become a millionaire while working a full-time, highly paid government job.

Using donors to enrich oneself is an old and tawdry practice that is about getting rich, not famous....

Public officials should not trade on connections to get rich. It's a basic violation of the public trust.

Even a weak, quasi-conservative candidate like Lonegan should be able to take this story and run with it. It may not make him New Jersey's next senator, but it will ensure that the voters who vote for Booker will know what they're getting: just another liberal suit that has been bought off by the powers-that-be.



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Photo of Steve Lonegan: AP Images

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