

Democrat Marisa DeFranco reemerges on political scene to challenge U.S. Rep. John Tierney in 6th Massachusetts Congressional District
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The fiery North Shore Democrat who refused to step aside for Elizabeth Warren in the 2012 U.S. Senate race in Massachusetts is back. Middleton immigration attorney Marisa DeFranco announced this week she is formally getting in the race to represent the 6th Congressional District, issuing a direct challenge to fellow Democrat, U.S. Rep. John Tierney.

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"I would never have gone along with the party line that 'if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor under Obamacare' because, unlike Congressman Tierney, I would have read the bill and told you what was in it before it was voted on," DeFranco said in announcing her candidacy this week. "Courage and leadership mean standing up to your own party sometimes. Doing so makes the party stronger. What Congressman Tierney did by blindly going along with the Obamacare talking points was weaken the party for Republicans to seize power. I will never leave you vulnerable like that."

For the past several years, Tierney has been embroiled at the edges of a scandal in which his wife and brother-in-law have been convicted of crimes and served time in jail for their respective roles in relation to an illegal gambling operation in Antigua. Tierney has said that he knew of the gambling operation, but thought it was entirely legal. Although he has never been charged with a crime, his proximity to the situation has increased his political baggage – and DeFranco is challenging Tierney, who has served since 1997, for the party's nomination.

Earlier this week Republican Richard Tisei, who narrowly lost the 2012 election to Tierney, announced he would challenge the congressman to a rematch.

Despite the state's Democratic leanings, Tisei raised slightly more money than Tierney during that race – \$2.3 million to Tierney's \$2.1 million. But Tierney won re-election by 4,330 votes.

DeFranco was ousted from the 2012 Massachusetts Senate race at the party's state convention in June of that year when the delegates who had previously indicated they would support her decided to back Warren, leaving the Harvard law School professor as the party's sole contender to challenge then Republican U.S. Senator Scott Brown. Warren went on to win that race, and DeFranco returned to her immigration law practice.

National Democrats and Republicans have already been active in the race for the 6th Congressional District as Tierney's seat is considered vulnerable. Presently the entire Massachusetts Congressional delegation is made up of Democrats, and Tisei represents the Republican Party's best chances to flip a seat. Tisei is a fiscally conservative and socially moderate Republican who supports abortion rights and gay marriage. Tisei is openly gay and was married in July to his partner Bernie Starr. The two co-own a real estate company.

DeFranco is a progressive Democrat who supports a single-payer health care system where taxpayer dollars are used to pay doctors. "Don't fall for the myth that a single-payer system is going to ration care," DeFranco told MassLive.com in 2012. "If we had single-payer and people had good care for the first 40 or 50 years of their lives, when they hit 65 we would save so much money with Medicare because they would be healthier. That's how you save money in the long-run."

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