

Len Rivera

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PUBLISHED: March 28, 2016 at 2:25 p.m. | UPDATED: August 20, 2021 at 4:37 a.m.

Kennett Square attorney Leonard Rivera ended his trouble filled campaign for state representative Monday, saying that his continued participation in he race to succeed incumbent state Rep. Chris Ross would not be in the best interests of the voters.

“After discussing this with my family, close friends and supporters, I’ve decided not to seek election as state representative in the 158th District,” said Rivera in a statement released by the Chester County Republican Committee. “I believe my candidacy will be a distraction and take away from the important issues facing the residents of my district.

“Because of that, I will return to private life,” Rivera said. “I appreciate all of the hard work and dedication my volunteers and supporters have provided to my campaign.”

Rivera, 61, of New Garden, had withdrawn his name from the ballot for the upcoming April 26 Primary Election earlier this month because of irregularities in his nominating petitions that threatened to have a state court order remove him from the ballot. Republican supporters of his Democratic opponent, small businesswoman Susan Rzucidlo of New Garden had challenged his petitions, saying the he improperly identified himself as the person who circulated some of the pages, when that was not the case.

Rivera could not be contacted Monday to comment further on his decision.

In response to Rivera’s announcement that he would not pursue a write-in candidacy, as he had previously stated he would, to win the GOP nomination, party Chairman Val DiGiorgio said his committee would begin seeking a replacement candidate soon.

“Lenny Rivera is a man of integrity, and I respect his decision,” DiGiorgio said in the GOP committee’s press release. “It takes courage to put the community before personal aspirations. Lenny is a longtime supporter of Republican causes and a friend of many years.”

DiGiorgio said a meeting to endorse a new candidate would be held sometime in the near future, but did not give a date. According to party sources, any candidate chosen by the county committee would also have to run as a write-in candidate.

She said she would continue with her intention to seek the GOP nomination through a write-in campaign. If she were to get more write-in votes than whoever the GOP endorses for the primary, she would have an uncontested path toward election in the fall. She is unopposed on the Democratic ballot.

Earlier this month, Rivera said he was withdrawing his name from the April 26 ballot ahead of a hearing in Commonwealth Court. Three local Republicans had challenged the petitions on the basis of a number of factors, chief among them that Rivera had not circulated the forms personally, as he stated he had.

Republican supporters of Rivera claimed the objections to Rivera's petitions were made on "technical" grounds and accused the challengers of playing politics. But Democrats said Rivera's attempt to submit fraudulent petitions showed a lack of good judgment that voters could take into account in November, should Rivera's write-in attempt succeed.

It marks the second time in two years that an endorsed GOP candidate has withdrawn his name from the ballot. In September 2014, East Marlborough Supervisor Cuyler Walker unexpectedly withdrew his name from contention, citing unspecified personal reasons. The Commonwealth Court later ruled that Ross's name could be added to the November ballot, a decision which angered Democratic supporters of Rzucidlo, who was running for the seat then as she is this year.

Ross was re-elected to his 10th term, but has declined to run again.

Rivera, of New Garden, is a legal solo practitioner who handles a variety of types of cases, both civil and criminal. It is his first run for political office.

Rzucidlo, of New Garden, a small business owner and nonprofit agency leader, has run for the 158th district seat in three previous elections.

Rivera won the GOP committee's endorsement in a three-way race in January.

Rivera bested candidates Perry Bentley, an East Marlborough executive, and Eric Roe of West Goshen, an administrative assistant in county Commissioner Michelle Kichline's office.

Neither Roe, who came in second in the balloting, nor Bentley, who placed third, could immediately be reached for comment on whether they would seek the committee's endorsement in the wake of Rivera's decision.

The 158th district includes municipalities in the county's south-central area.

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