

# FRONTLINE VOICES

NYC PRIMARY DAY VOTER GUIDE | June 23, 2026

Six Congressional Races — Who They Are, What to Watch, and What the Choice Means for Your Community

**HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:** ✓ = A genuine strength | △ = A legitimate concern | ✗ = A disqualifying factor | ⚡ = Mamdani endorsement impact | ★ = Frenchie & John's honest read for community change-seekers | ⚠ = The thing to watch that nobody's talking about enough | This guide is from a progressive public-interest perspective. Voters should weigh their own values and priorities.

**12TH DISTRICT** Midtown Manhattan — Upper West & East Sides — Central Park | **No Incumbent — Jerry Nadler**

Retiring | ★ **MOST EXPENSIVE RACE IN THE CITY**

⚡ **Z FACTOR:** Mamdani has stayed OUT of this race. No DSA endorsement. No Mamdani pick.

💰 **MONEY:** Bloomberg super PAC backing one candidate. AI company PACs spending heavily. Candidate with most outside money may not be the most authentic choice.

**ALEX BORES** (Assembly Member)

- ✓ Experienced legislator in the district. Has shown knowledge of local issues.
- ✓ Running on abolishing ICE — a clear progressive stance.
- ✓ Strong digital organizing background.
- ⚠ Worked at Palantir — the surveillance and defense technology company that has active contracts with ICE and border enforcement agencies. This is a direct and serious contradiction of his anti-ICE platform.
- ⚠ Only 12% of his donations come from within the 12th District itself. Who is actually funding him?
- ⚠ AI PACs have been spending in this race — raises questions about tech industry influence.

**MICAH LASHER** (Assembly Member)

- ✓ Legislative experience. Policy depth.
- ✓ Mamdani political adviser Morris Katz has reportedly rallied support for Lasher — the closest thing to a Mamdani signal in this race.
- ⚠ More establishment profile than other candidates.
- ⚠ Bloomberg's super PAC spending in the race has blurred who is being helped and how.

**JACK SCHLOSSBERG** (JFK Grandson)

- ✓ Fresh energy. Strong communicator. Has drawn genuine public interest and shown ability to message to voters Democrats have long lost.
- ✓ Polling has shown him leading the race.
- ⚠ Political legacy candidacy — the JFK connection is brand, not policy substance.
- ⚠ Limited political or legislative experience.
- ⚠ Name recognition is not the same as a governing vision.

**GEORGE CONWAY** (Former Republican, Never-Trumper)

- ✓ Name recognition from anti-Trump media presence. Has demonstrated willingness to break from the Republican Party.
- ⚠ Registered Democrat only recently. Was a Republican operative for decades.
- ⚠ No legislative experience. No record of fighting for progressive issues.
- ⚠ Running in one of the most progressive districts in the country as a newly converted Democrat is a fundamental mismatch.
- ✗ **The record of party affiliation matters. Being anti-Trump is not the same as being pro-community.**

## NINA SCHWALBE

- ✓ Public health background. Policy depth. Less driven by outside money than some peers.
- ⚠ Name recognition is the challenge in a crowded field with flashier candidates.

★ **FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE:** If you want movement continuity, Micah Lasher has the closest signal to the Mamdani orbit. If you want new energy with substance, Nina Schwalbe has depth. If name recognition and messaging capacity matter most to you, Schlossberg is the conversation. AVOID George Conway if your concern is authentic Democratic values — the record does not support the claim.

⊖ **WATCH:** The sheer volume of outside money in this race — Bloomberg, AI PACs, tech interests — means whoever wins will arrive in Congress with obligations that were not made to the community they represent. Ask who is funding the candidate before you pull the lever.

## 7TH DISTRICT *Brooklyn: Bushwick, Williamsburg, Downtown Brooklyn — Queens: LIC, Astoria, Sunnyside* | No Incumbent — Nydia Velázquez Retiring | ★ 'COMMIE CORRIDOR' — MOST LEFT-WING DISTRICT

⚡ **Z FACTOR:** Mamdani is ALL IN for Claire Valdez. This is his biggest congressional bet. Velázquez is upset and endorsed Reynoso. The two biggest names in district history are on opposite sides.

💰 **MONEY:** Reynoso has the institutional money. Valdez has the grassroots energy. No Bloomberg PACs here — this is a movement-vs-labor-machine race.

## CLAIRE VALDEZ *(Assembly Member, DSA-backed, Mamdani-endorsed)*

- ✓ Mamdani's personal endorsement — the most powerful signal in NYC progressive politics.
- ✓ DSA organizational backing — the army of volunteers that elected Mamdani is now working for her.
- ✓ Bernie Sanders endorsement.
- ✓ Running on rent freeze and universal rent control — policies that directly address the district's housing crisis.
- ✓ Represents the direct continuation of the movement that transformed NYC politics.
- ⚠ Relatively unknown outside DSA and movement circles before this race.
- ⚠ Running against a candidate with significantly broader institutional union backing.
- ⚠ The test: can the mayor's endorsement win a congressional race, or did his coalition vote for him personally?

## ANTONIO REYNOSO *(Brooklyn Borough President)*

- ✓ Executive governing experience as Borough President — has actually run something.
- ✓ Broad and impressive union coalition: New York Working Families Party, 32BJ SEIU, DC 37, Hotel and Gaming Trades Council.
- ✓ Letitia James endorsement — significant political weight.
- ✓ Real community roots in Brooklyn.
- ⚠ Not the DSA choice in one of DSA's strongest districts.
- ⚠ Velázquez's endorsement, while prestigious, is also the endorsement of the outgoing establishment.
- ⚠ Does he represent the change this district voted for overwhelmingly in 2025 (Mamdani 65%, Cuomo only 20%)? This district is the most left-leaning in the city — does Reynoso's coalition match its energy?

## JULIE WON *(City Council Member, Late Entrant)*

- ✓ Elected experience. Asian American representation in a diverse district.
- ⚠ Late entry into the race may split the vote without building the coalition to win.
- ⚠ Could function as a spoiler in what should be a cleaner two-person race.

★ **FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE:** This district voted 65% Mamdani in 2025. The authentic extension of that vote is Claire Valdez. Reynoso is a real candidate with real credentials — but the district has already told us what kind of politics it wants. If you want to extend the Mamdani mandate into Congress, Valdez is the vote. If you want experienced governance with broad union backing, Reynoso has the coalition. Know your own priorities.

🚫 **WATCH:** The split vote problem: if Won pulls enough votes, neither Valdez nor Reynoso can clear the field. In a district this left-leaning, a vote for the least viable candidate could cost the movement its best congressional shot.

**10TH DISTRICT** *Manhattan: West Village, Greenwich Village, East Village, LES, Tribeca, Financial District — Brooklyn: Brooklyn Heights, Red Hook, Park Slope, Sunset Park* | **Incumbent: Rep. Dan Goldman vs. Brad Lander**

⚡ **Z FACTOR:** Mamdani fully endorsed Lander, cleared his lane by nudging a DSA ally out. Goldman never endorsed Mamdani for mayor. That was not forgotten.

💰 **MONEY:** Goldman is pouring \$1 million of his OWN MONEY into the race and vowing to match outside donations. Lander pledged no super PAC money — and has kept it.

**BRAD LANDER** *(Former NYC Comptroller, Mayoral Candidate)*

- ✅ Mamdani's personal endorsement — again, the most powerful signal available.
- ✅ Deep policy experience as NYC Comptroller. Understands city finances and accountability.
- ✅ Clear, specific stance on Palestine: 'I would not support any additional U.S. military aid to Israel' currently. Supports Block the Bombs Act and Ceasefire Compliance Act.
- ✅ Pledged to donate campaign funds to charity if super PACs intervene on his behalf. They haven't. He has honored the pledge.
- ✅ This is his home neighborhood — he represented it on the City Council from 2010. He knows these streets.
- ⚠️ Just came out of a failed mayoral race. Some voters wonder if the primary loss signals ceiling concerns.
- ⚠️ Congressional races require a different skill set than comptroller or city council work.

**REP. DAN GOLDMAN** *(Incumbent)*

- ✅ Congressional seniority matters. Goldman is building relationships and committee positioning that take years to develop.
- ✅ Has used courts and official visits to improve conditions for immigrants at 26 Federal Plaza.
- ✅ Cosponsored federal legislation to tax the wealthy.
- ✅ J Street (pro-Israel progressive group) endorsed him — though they also 'approved' Lander.
- ⚠️ Never endorsed Mamdani for mayor. In this political moment in this district, that is a real tell about where he sees his coalition.
- ⚠️ Using \$1 million of personal wealth to hold a congressional seat raises questions about what a 1-percenter's priorities will be in Congress.
- ⚠️ His stance on Israel/Palestine is more cautious than the district's leftward shift suggests.
- ⚠️ Was first elected in 2022 by spending significant personal wealth in a crowded race — the wealth strategy is becoming a pattern.

★ **FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE:** Brad Lander. This is one of the clearer choices on today's ballot. He has Mamdani's endorsement, a no-PAC-money pledge he has honored, a specific and principled stance on Palestine, and a record of representing exactly these neighborhoods. Goldman has seniority — but seniority in service of what values is the question.

🚫 **WATCH:** The \$1 million of Goldman's own money flowing into this race is not neutral. Personal wealth spending in congressional races creates governing obligations to no one but the candidate's own interests. This district has already shown it can produce progressive victories without billionaire backing.

**13TH DISTRICT** *Upper Manhattan: Inwood, Washington Heights, East Harlem, Harlem, Morningside Heights — Bronx: Fordham, Bedford Park, Kingsbridge* | **Incumbent: Rep. Adriano Espaillat (since 2017) vs. Darializa Avila Chevalier**

⚡ **Z FACTOR:** Mamdani endorsed Avila Chevalier on May 29 after initially staying out. His late entry breathed new energy into her campaign. The district voted 47% Mamdani in 2025.

💰 **MONEY:** AIPAC is spending heavily to boost Espaillat. Both campaigns are criticizing super PAC involvement while benefiting from it.

**DARIALIZA AVILA CHEVALIER** *(32-year-old Afro-Latina organizer, DSA-backed, Mamdani-endorsed)*

- ✅ Mamdani's endorsement — and he specifically came into this race to support her. That is a deliberate bet.

- ✔ Justice Democrats, DSA New York City, UAW endorsements — a powerful left-labor coalition.
- ✔ Represents generational change in a district that has been represented by the same political structure for decades.
- ✔ 32 years old. Afro-Latina. CUNY PhD candidate. Public defense investigator at Neighborhood Defenders Services of Harlem. Member of United Auto Workers.
- ✔ Like AOC and Jamaal Bowman before her, she represents the pattern: young, community-rooted, upstart taking on an entrenched incumbent from the left.
- ✔ Played a prominent role in pro-Palestine encampments at Columbia University — in a district where those politics resonate.
- ⚠ First-time candidate with no legislative experience.
- ⚠ Running against an incumbent with deep community roots, significant name recognition, and major institutional funding.
- ⚠ AIPAC's spending for Espaillat will be significant.

#### REP. ADRIANO ESPAILLAT *(Incumbent, serving since 2017)*

- ✔ One of the most influential Latino leaders in the state. Deep community ties in Washington Heights and Upper Manhattan.
- ✔ Congressional experience and relationships.
- ✔ Has built genuine infrastructure in the district over years.
- ⚠ AIPAC is his primary outside support mechanism — in a district with significant Palestinian-American and Arab-American communities, that alignment raises real questions.
- ⚠ The same district that voted 47% for Mamdani is asking whether its representation should match its politics.
- ⚠ The era of entrenched incumbency in left-leaning NYC districts is being tested everywhere this cycle — Espaillat is part of that test.
- ⚠ Like AOC's primary against Joe Crowley and Bowman's against Eliot Engel, the question is: does the incumbent still represent what this community has become?

★ **FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE:** Darializa Avila Chevalier. The pattern in this city is clear: when an upstart with movement backing, DSA support, and Mamdani's endorsement runs against an AIPAC-funded incumbent in a district that voted overwhelmingly for Mamdani, the community is being asked if it wants its representative to match its politics. The AOC and Bowman precedents say this is possible. The Mamdani endorsement makes it credible.

➖ **WATCH:** AIPAC's spending in this race is significant and will shape what voters see in ads in the final days. The source of outside money in any race tells you something about who the candidate owes after they win. Voters should ask: whose phone calls does each candidate answer the morning after the election?

#### 6TH DISTRICT *Queens: Flushing, Fresh Meadows, Forest Hills, Corona, Jackson Heights, Bayside* | **Incumbent: Rep. Grace Meng (since 2012) vs. Chuck Park**

⚡ **Z FACTOR:** Mamdani is STAYING OUT of this race. He didn't do particularly well in this district.

💰 **MONEY:** Meng has \$1.28 million cash on hand. Park has \$128,000. The money gap is 10-to-1.

#### CHUCK PARK *(Former State Department employee, City Council staffer)*

- ✔ Represents a genuine effort to hold Meng accountable for her immigration record in a heavily immigrant district.
- ✔ Jackson Heights roots — a community that has been at the forefront of immigrant rights organizing.
- ✔ Tried to capture the Mamdani-adjacent energy in the district's more left-leaning western neighborhoods.
- ⚠ Only \$128,000 in campaign funds against \$1.28 million. This is a David vs. Goliath fight with less favorable terrain than Avila Chevalier faces in the 13th.
- ⚠ Failed to win the Working Families Party endorsement — after a complicated process that included a reversal.
- ⚠ His former boss, Council Member Shekar Krishnan, endorsed Meng. That's a personal and political blow.
- ⚠ Mamdani stayed out. Without the organizational backing that has powered other insurgent campaigns, the path to victory is very narrow.

#### REP. GRACE MENG *(Incumbent, serving since 2012)*

- ✔ Long-term congressional experience. Deep relationships in the Queens Asian-American community.

- ✓ Ally of House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries — real institutional power.
- ✓ Broad coalition including outgoing Rep. Nydia Velázquez and progressive Council Member Shekar Krishnan.
- ⚠ Accused by Park of being out of touch on immigration — serious charge in a district that is heavily immigrant.
- ⚠ The district's western neighborhoods have moved left significantly, and Meng has not fully tracked that shift.
- ⚠ Her seat has become more diverse politically, with eastern neighborhoods moving right while western neighborhoods moved left. She has struggled to serve both.

★ **FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE:** This is the hardest race on this card to call for community change. Park's resource deficit makes his victory very difficult. That said, if you live in Jackson Heights, Sunnyside, or the district's western neighborhoods and want immigration accountability from your representative, Park represents that demand. Know that you may be voting your values rather than the likely winner in this one.

⊖ **WATCH:** The 10-to-1 money gap is real. But so is the gap in accountability. Meng has served since 2012 without facing a serious challenge. Elections, even ones you lose, send a message.

## 15TH DISTRICT *South Bronx north to the borough's edge: Mott Haven, Morrisania, Riverdale* | Incumbent: Rep. Ritchie Torres vs. Michael Blake, Jose Vega

⚡ **Z FACTOR:** Mamdani did NOT endorse in this race. He and Blake cross-endorsed during last year's mayoral primary, but Mamdani stayed out. The district voted 52% Cuomo, 33% Mamdani — the least Mamdani-friendly of the six races today.

💰 **MONEY:** Torres has \$15 million. Blake has \$65,000. Vega has \$3,000. The most lopsided money gap of any race today.

### MICHAEL BLAKE *(Former Assembly Member)*

- ✓ Has actual legislative experience — the most credible alternative to Torres in this race.
- ✓ Cross-endorsed Mamdani in last year's mayoral primary.
- ✓ Running on genuine accountability for Torres's pro-Israel stance in a district where Bronx families feel their interests are being deprioritized.
- ⚠ Lost to Torres in the 2020 primary with 18% of the vote.
- ⚠ Only \$65,000 in cash vs. Torres's \$15 million — the resource gap is nearly impossible to overcome.
- ⚠ Without Mamdani's endorsement or DSA backing, the organizational infrastructure needed to overcome this kind of incumbent advantage is not in place.

### JOSE VEGA *(27-year-old political organizer)*

- ✓ Young. Anti-establishment. Running against Torres's pro-Israel stance.
- ✗ **VEGA IS A SELF-DESCRIBED 'LAROUCHITE' — a follower of Lyndon LaRouche. This is disqualifying information that voters deserve to know.**
- ✗ **Lyndon LaRouche's movement has documented connections to conspiracy theories, antisemitism accusations, and cult-like organizing tactics. LaRouche ran for president eight times between 1978 and 2004 and was connected to fringe political extremism.**
- ✗ **Vega ran against Torres in 2024 on the LaRouche Party line and received 2.4% of the vote. He has now entered the Democratic primary. This is not a progressive candidacy — it is a LaRouchite attempt to infiltrate a Democratic primary.**
- ✗ **He has raised approximately \$3,000. This is not a serious congressional campaign.**

### REP. RITCHIE TORRES *(Incumbent)*

- ✓ Congressional experience. Building seniority. Real resource base.
- ✓ Has delivered some constituent services for the South Bronx.
- ⚠ \$15 million in campaign funds — the question is always where that money came from and what obligations it creates.
- ⚠ Pro-Israel stance and AIPAC ties in a district where Black and Latino Bronx families are asking why their representative's foreign policy priorities don't match their community concerns.
- ⚠ Blake and Vega both argue Torres prioritizes foreign interests over Bronx families — a charge that resonates with many constituents.

★ **FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE:** Michael Blake is the only credible alternative to Torres. The resource gap is significant and his path to victory is narrow, but he represents the only non-Torres, non-LaRouchite choice in this race. If you want accountability from your representative on Palestine and on Bronx community priorities, Blake is where that vote goes.

⊖ **WATCH:** The Jose Vega candidacy requires direct naming: LaRouche affiliation is not a progressive politics. Voters unfamiliar with the LaRouche movement should know that LaRouchites have a documented history of conspiracy theory, extremism, and political manipulation. A vote for Vega is not a protest vote against Torres — it is an accidental vote for a fringe political tradition with a troubling history. Vote Blake if you want to register dissent against Torres.