



Democrat Nathan McMurray has a huge financial disadvantage to incumbent Rep. Chris Collins for Congress in 2018. (Sharon Cantillon/News file photo)

McMurray raises less for Congress than Dems who dropped out

By [Jerry Zremski](#) | Published 6:00 a.m. April 17, 2018

WASHINGTON – Nathan D. McMurray, the Grand Island town supervisor and party-anointed Democratic challenger to Republican Rep. Chris Collins in New York's 27th district, has raised far less campaign money so far than did four of the Democratic candidates who have dropped out of the race.

McMurray raised \$41,786 between Jan. 14 – the date he entered the race – and March 31, according to the first-quarter campaign finance report he filed Sunday with the Federal Election Commission. That means McMurray remains a gigantic financial underdog to Collins, who has been fundraising aggressively for a year and who had \$1.27 million on hand as of March 31.

In contrast to McMurray, Sean Bunny, a lawyer from the district who dropped out of the race when it became clear that party leaders backed McMurray, raised \$113,916 last year. Nick Stankevich, a Rochester-area businessman who left the race last week, raised \$96,073 as of March 31. And two women who have left the race – Erin Cole and Joan Elizabeth Seamans – each raised more than \$60,000.

McMurray filed his campaign finance report just as close associates to Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo tried to push him out of the race over the weekend in favor of Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul. Asked if his fundraising totals might be among those people tried to get him to quit his campaign, McMurray said: "No one knew my campaign financing data. I haven't talked to a soul about it."

McMurray called his campaign finance report "a family and friends filing at this point." He said he put his first priority on traveling the district and collecting signatures to get on the ballot rather than raising money.

"We were busy with getting a campaign infrastructure together, getting a volunteer structure together," he said. "We think we've done a pretty good job, and we can focus on getting the money now that we need to actually win."

Erie County Democratic Chairman Jeremy J. Zellner, who pushed McMurray for the party nomination to take on Collins, said he was not concerned about McMurray's fundraising total. But Zellner acknowledged the Grand Island supervisor is proving to be an unconventional candidate.

Traveling the district, "He didn't say: 'Give me your cash,' " Zellner said. "He said: 'Give me your ear.' "

Meantime, Collins' political adviser, Christopher M. Grant, dismissed McMurray's fundraising as "embarrassing."

The campaign finance documents filed Sunday showed Collins, of Clarence, to be one of two Western New York Republicans with a huge financial advantage in what's expected to be a challenging fall campaign for Republicans. Rep. Tom Reed, a Corning Republican who represents much of the Southern Tier, raised more than \$2 million for his campaign and had \$1.1 million left as of March 31.

"Our campaign continues to build grassroots support and financial strength," said Nicholas Weinstein, Reed's campaign manager.

Reed's top-funded Democratic challenger, Ithaca physician Linda Andrei, had \$210,534 on hand as of March 31 – more than the amount her four remaining Democratic challengers had combined.

"This report shows that we will have the resources to organize and get my message out over the next two months and start the important work of turning this district around," said Andrei, whose campaign war chest consisted largely of the \$170,000 she lent her own campaign.

Among other Democratic challengers in the 23rd District, retired Air Force Col. Max Della Pia had \$76,473.45 on hand as of March 31, while Ithaca business consultant Tracy Mitrano had \$70,363.02. Ithaca businessman Ian Golden had \$15,807, and Jamestown lawyer Eddie Sundquist had \$11,498.

All those candidates will likely now focus on fundraising before the June 26 primary, while McMurray plans to gear up his effort to raise cash long before the November general election.

"Now I've hired a team of people with me, and they're like: 'You've got to start raising money,' " McMurray said. "So that's what I'm doing."