

Markey's 2013 Republican Rival Gabriel Gomez Backing Kennedy in Senate Race

By Matt Murphy, State House News Service

It may come as little surprise that as one of the last two people to occupy the same ballot as U.S. Sen. Edward Markey, Gabriel Gomez is not the Democrat's biggest fan.

But it would have been harder to predict seven years ago that the GOP's 2013 nominee for U.S. Senate would one day endorse Markey's Democratic rival for re-election, turning his back on two candidates from the party he once represented to back someone with one of the most famous last names in Democratic politics.

"Yes, I'm endorsing Kennedy in the race," Gomez told the News Service by email on Thursday. "Markey is the poster boy for term limits."

Markey, who has served in Congress since 1976, is seeking his second, full term in the U.S. Senate, but is facing a primary challenge from Congressman Joseph Kennedy III. Markey and Kennedy debated for the first time on Tuesday night, during which Kennedy went after the incumbent for voting "present" in committee on a resolution to give President Barack Obama the authority to use military force in Syria.

Markey said he wanted to force the administration to turn over more information before he made a decision, but Kennedy accused Markey of ducking his responsibility.

"It's hard for me to understand when a present vote is going to be a profile in courage," Kennedy said.

The moment struck a chord with Gomez, who Tweeted about it,

taking Kennedy's side. He returned to the topic Thursday after being contacted about his thoughts on the race.

"His vote of 'present' showed clearly he doesn't have the conviction or courage to do his job," Gomez said.

"After 43 years in DC, we still have no immigration reform, women are still being paid less than men, and so on ... there isn't anything Markey has successfully led on that has been accomplished. He's All Hat, No Cattle," Gomez wrote.

Gomez, former Navy SEAL and private equity investor, left the Republican Party ahead of the 2018 midterms when he considered running as an independent against U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, citing an ideological shift in the party at the national level that left him unable to support the Republican agenda.

He ended up staying out of that race, and currently runs a company, 02X, that he started with other veterans providing corporate educational seminars, specialized training plans, and executive development programming.

Gomez, who was a political newcomer at the time, won a three-way Republican primary in the 2013 special election to succeed John Kerry against former U.S. Attorney Michael Sullivan and then state Rep. Daniel Winslow. But he lost to Markey in the general election by 10 points, 55 percent to 45 percent.

Markey became the Democratic nominee in that race by topping Congressman Stephen Lynch, and won a full, six-year term a year later when he ran unopposed for the Democratic nomination and easily defeated Republican Brian Herr.

Despite his low opinion of Markey, Kennedy is not the only other choice in the race.

Kevin O'Connor, a Boston attorney who entered the Republican Senate primary this week, pledged, if elected, to "change the tone" in Washington, D.C. and break the mold of professional

politicians “more interested in engaging in self-serving partisan conflict and cozying up to special interests than in making progress for their constituents.”

O'Connor is running against Shiva Ayyadurai, a bombastic, conservative entrepreneur and engineer, who ran as an independent in 2018 against Warren and Republican Geof Diehl.

“As for the Republican candidate – I don't know him but have not heard anything negative,” Gomez said, referring to O'Connor.

“However, at this point in our country and given how the Republican party has completely capitulated to Trump (except for (Utah Sen. Mitt Romney), there is absolutely no chance I would endorse a Republican candidate for any federal office unless they were a veteran that I personally knew, respected and know would put country over party,” he said.

During his 2013 race against Markey, the Democrat needled Gomez for refusing to take the so-called “People's Pledge” to restrict spending by outside groups and super PACs in their election.

The pledge pioneered by Warren and Scott Brown in their own 2012 U.S. Senate race is again an issue in the Senate race, and this time it's Markey who doesn't want to take the pledge.

Markey is instead advocating for an “updated” pledge that would allow progressive groups with “positive” messaging to advertise on a candidate's behalf.

Gomez said Markey's position on outside spending “is the height of hypocrisy – the stance and justification would be something Trump would say.”

Asked if the WGBH debate convinced him to back Kennedy, Gomez said it wasn't the determining factor.

“I've always been a fan of JKIII and was going to support

him," Gomez said.

Markey's campaign declined to comment.